the weekly standard

SEPTEMBER 14, 1998

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ROBERT KAGAN

THE HEAVYWEIGHT

GEORGE W. BUSH ENTERS THE PRESIDENTIAL RING

BY FRED BARNES

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In his new biography, James Chace represents Truman's secretary of state as a "realist." In fact, Acheson's statesmanship was based on his understanding of the central role of morality in American foreign policy. His true heir—and the man who completed his work—was Ronald Reagan.

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The Audit Bureau Member

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But What About the Children?

It is no surprise that the world's most prominent wronged wife, Hillary Rodham Clinton, is feeling underappreciated at home these days. But isn't this taking things a bit far? In a discussion with Russian women in Moscow last week, the first lady said that nothing ails the world's women that a good old-fashioned strike couldn't cure.

"If one day women stopped doing the work they do in the home," Mrs. Clinton said, "it wouldn't take an economist to understand how important women's contributions are to keeping society going. So if we don't get the changes that I think we need, sometime in the 21st century I hope we'll have a global work stoppage inside the home." Not for the first time, Mrs. Clinton seems to be confusing the personal with the political.

There's a further bizarre addendum to the president's Moscow sojourn: The governor of the Russian region of Saratov, a politician called Dmitry Ayatskov, got to meet the leader of the Free World and really, really liked him. How much? The Associated Press quoted a dizzy Ayatskov saying, "I envy Monica Lewinsky." Maybe Mrs. Ayatskov should start her work stoppage right away.

It Takes a Flack

Jack O'Dwyer's Newsletter, the "inside news of public relations," had a fascinating item in its August 26 edition on the president's televised Lewinsky speech. Big-league PR executives commented on Clinton's body language and tone of voice and whatnot. One of them, however, disdained all such talk of style as a news media "obsession" and returned instead to first principles.

"New York counselor Robert Dilenschneider," the newsletter reports, believes a presidential resignation or impeachment is unlikely "because Democrats do not want Speaker of the House Newt Gingrich as Vice President (replacing Al Gore who would become President)."

Yes, that would be a problem. But it wouldn't happen. It is true that the nation's rules of presidential succession hold—as only a few schoolboys but every speaker of the House knows—that when the president and vice-president are simultaneously incapacitated, the speaker becomes president. But if Al Gore became president, he would name a new vice president, who would be confirmed by the Senate. Newt would stay in third place.

But hey. The Scrapbook is charmed by the idea of a Dilenschneider Amendment to the Constitution, which would go something like this: If the president gets impeached, the vice president takes his place . . . and everyone else in the country gets to move up a chair, too!

Think of it: Newt gets to be vice president, president pro tempore of the Senate Strom Thurmond becomes the oldest speaker ever. Betsy McCaughey Ross gets to be governor of New York, Avis takes over as the number-one car-rental agency, and Sammy Sosa wins the home-run title instead of Mark McGwire. And The Scrapbook gets its own Fox News show.

Senator Joey Boy

Joe Biden of Delaware turned in a shameful performance at last week's Senate hearing with Scott Ritter—the United Nations official who recently resigned because the Clinton administration was blocking his weapons inspections in Iraq (see Matthew Rees's "Smearing Scott Ritter," page 9). Biden began his questioning of Ritter by falsely claiming that Ritter was single-handedly trying to determine when the United States should use military force against Iraq. Having recklessly distorted Ritter's position, Biden then berated Ritter—even calling him "Scottie boy"—for holding views he'd never expressed. "I respectfully suggest, Major," that "they [the secretary of state and secretary of defense] have responsibilities slightly above your pay grade. . . . Whether or not to take the nation to war . . . that's a

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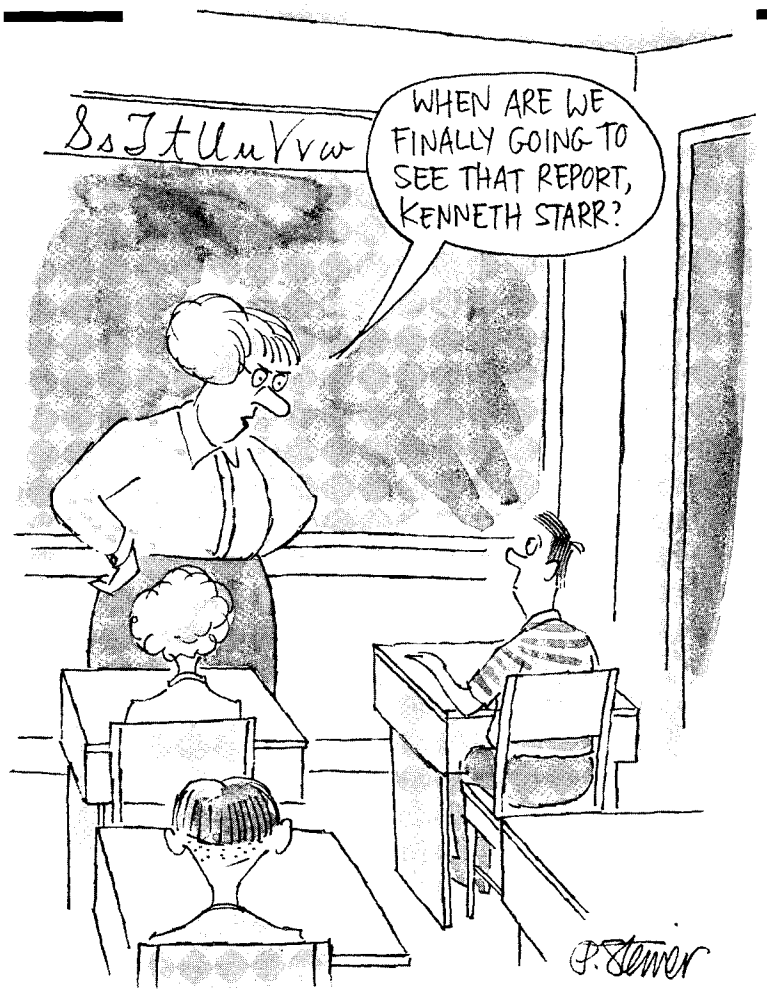

real tough decision. That's why they get paid the big bucks. That's why they get the limos and you don't."

Just in case Ritter didn't understand the first time, Biden repeated the point later: "They get paid more than you, their job's a hell of a lot more complicated than yours. . . . It's above your pay grade." Biden came across not only as insufferably condescending and bullying, but as a man with an unseemly fixation on pay grades. Maybe all those hair plugs are getting a little expensive for the senatorial pay grade.

The Democrats' David Duke

Geoffrey Fieger, the out-of-control Democratic nominee for governor in Michigan, continues to be an embarrassment to the Democratic party. His failure to retract any of his venomous statements—he's compared Orthodox rabbis to Nazis—prompted Abraham Foxman of the Anti-Defamation League to send him a letter on September 2 saying that such statements are "shockingly offensive, outrageous and unacceptable."

Most Michigan Democrats, recognizing Fieger's liabilities, have been shrewd enough not to align themselves too closely with him. By the same token, they've been unwilling to say anything critical of him. They may not be able to maintain their silence too long, though: A Republican campaign theme this fall will be to ask Democrats to clarify whether they stand with Fieger. Seeing how they tiptoe around this issue should make for priceless political theater.

Bill Clinton's Greatest Hits

"People expect you to look them in the eye, tell em the truth, and they evaluate it."

Louisville Courier-Journal, *Oct. 29, 1992*

"There is no such thing as truth to [George Bush]. He just says whatever sounds good."

Boston Globe, *Oct. 29, 1992*

"I am concerned by any action which sends a signal that if you work for the government you're above the law, or that not telling the truth to Congress, under oath, is somehow less serious than not telling the truth to some other body under oath."

The president-elect, after the Iran-contra pardons, December 1992

Sorry

The printer garbled the final paragraph of Christopher Matthews's review last week ("Clinton v. America? Bill Bennett's Book of Outrage"). It should have read: "We have an uninterrupted democracy stretching back to the eighteenth century. Unlike the French, we haven't had a Second Republic or Third, Fourth, or Fifth. We have only the one we started with. In deciding about his last two years in office, the good citizen might attempt the maturity Clinton has shown at his best, not the passion he pursued at his worst. Otherwise, this year of the French will end as badly as it began."

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Of Resignation and Loyalty

Perhaps you have supplied the answer to your own question about the honor of some, if not all, of the workers in this White House ("Where Are the Resignations?" Aug. 31). Clinton may ride out the next two years and his aides may be loath to surrender a White House working address, its varied perks, their salaries, and their pensions. If they hang on, they could last far beyond his sooner-or-later departure, as countless other underlings have done in other corrupt, dishonorable political administrations.

Finding a job where honor is an essential element may require flight beyond the Beltway, because what we see Clinton's aides exhibiting may not even be blind loyalty, but an open-eyed, partial implementing of Hillel's "If I am not for myself, who will be?"

EDWARD J. FISCHER
JERSEY CITY, NJ

Lyons and Tigers and Spin

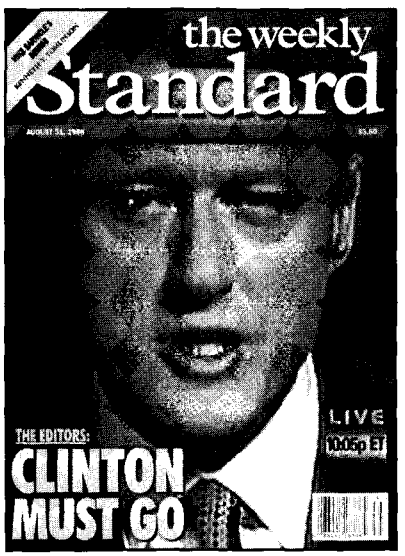
Jay Nordlinger's article effectively highlights how Clinton loyalists such as Eleanor Clift, Geraldo Rivera, and Gene Lyons are serving as conduits of deception when it comes to the improper, and potentially criminal, behavior of our president ("Après le Speech," Aug. 31). It also reveals that these pundits are recklessly ignoring the heart of the Lewinsky scandal, which lies in Bill Clinton's pattern of abusive treatment of government employees.

The visible trail of victims starts with Gov. Clinton's inappropriately asking Paula Jones, a state employee, for oral sex. It proceeds into his presidency where he gropes Kathleen Willey, a White House volunteer, after she asks for a promotion. From there, the president shamefully exploits Monica Lewinsky, an intern, both emotionally and sexually. And if that weren't enough, the president then asks trusted advisers, his secretary, and other White House subordinates to vouch for his character, cover up traces of his indiscretions, and worst of all, defame those who have tried to disclose his egregious actions.

The president's is not a private matter. It is unacceptable public behavior by an elected official who habitually mistreats subordinates. As such, the noble thing for the president to do is resign. If he chooses not to, then he must be formally punished. Whether impeachment is appropriate remains to be seen.

Nevertheless, we as Americans cannot ignore his actions. We cannot stick our heads in the sand like Clift and Rivera. If we do, we set a dangerous precedent. We lay the groundwork for a political system where public officials, especially popular ones, are free to mistreat public employees and then cover up their abuses without facing due consequences.

It goes without saying that a society



genuinely devoted to freedom and fairness cannot function under such a system.

ANDREW ACKERMAN
BOWLING GREEN, OH

Contrary to Jay Nordlinger's statement, Gene Lyons is not an "*Arkansas Democrat-Gazette* writer" nor has he ever been an employee of our newspaper in any capacity.

Gene Lyons is a self-employed freelance author who lives in Little Rock. He sells his work to many publications, including ours.

Once a week we carry an opinion column by Lyons because we believe some of our readers are interested in his views. He speaks for himself, not for us.

GRIFFIN SMITH JR.
EXECUTIVE EDITOR
ARKANSAS DEMOCRAT-GAZETTE
LITTLE ROCK, AR

JAY NORDLINGER RESPONDS: ***Gene Lyons has earned a national reputation as a* Democrat-Gazette *columnist. He is almost always identified in the rest of the media as such. The newspaper's eagerness to distance itself from this particular star is both understandable and touching.***

To Go or Not to Go

Your call for the president's resignation is remarkably reserved ("Clinton Must Go," Aug. 31). After all, his *mea culpa* was not a heartfelt confession, but a political necessity, forced by the revelation of the spotted dress. But worse, his admission that "legally accurate" language had deceived the public was immediately followed by legally accurate language denying other wrongdoing.

This was followed by a defensive claim that Bill and Monica's actions were merely private matters. You have adequately questioned the legality of this claim, since this behavior has an effect on the country's business. But from a broader, ethical point of view, adultery itself is not merely a private matter, since it is a violation of a marriage, and marriage is a public covenant between two individuals, not only for the protection of the individuals and their children, but also for the good of society.

This suggests why Clinton was so defensive: His words and actions represent a consistent endorsement of the sexual revolution, which separates sexual activity from the purposes of marriage and erodes societal support for marriage.

Recall that the only point of Clinton's original agenda that he has not accommodated to Republicans is his adamant advocacy of abortion and that unlimited abortion is intimately linked with the sexual revolution—in fact, it is practically required by it. The common root of his advocacy of abortion and his "private" sexual conduct is now clear and may, alas, also suggest why the

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public is reluctant to disapprove of his actions.

WILLIAM PETER MAHRT
STANFORD, CA

EYES ON SANCTIONS

Elliott Abrams misrepresents the position of USA*Engage and the business community ("Words or War," July 27). When he states that "the explicit goal of the several hundred business and trade associations that make up USA*Engage is to end the use of sanctions as a tool of U.S. foreign policy," he is simply incorrect.

If he wishes to criticize us for our official position—which is to encourage the United States to seek alternatives to unilateral sanctions—let's debate the issue. The truth is, we are not aware of any written document, testimony, press release, advertisement, or comment issued by USA*Engage or its representatives that states anything about putting an end to the use of sanctions. We have gone to great lengths to point out that, yes, sometimes sanctions are necessary—and that national security should always be the paramount concern. But we have always stressed that there are other ways to achieve our foreign-policy goals instead of relying so heavily on ineffective and counterproductive unilateral sanctions.

Abrams's arguments are also unfortunate in the cavalier manner in which he dismisses Sen. Richard Lugar and the legislation he has cosponsored with Rep. Lee Hamilton. These are two of the most thoughtful and highly regarded members of Congress, both of whom are widely recognized as experts on foreign-policy issues. To imply that these leaders are only doing the bidding of the business lobby—to the detriment of U.S. foreign policy—is thoughtless and untrue, as well as insulting to these two respected leaders. Moreover, casting off any discussion of the Sanctions Reform Act with a flip comment about how future sanctions would be "gutted" misses the point.

Far from a device to gut future sanctions, the Sanctions Reform Act will provide for a more deliberative and disciplined approach to U.S. sanctions policy. The legislation is an attempt to provide a common-sense approach to a process that has all too often been driven by short-term considerations and partisan politics. After all, shouldn't policymakers want to know up-front if a proposed sanction is likely to be effective in achieving U.S. objectives? What's wrong with knowing the economic costs to American industry and agriculture, including any long-term damage to America's reputation as a reliable supplier—before we impose a sanction? Shouldn't we at least ask ourselves whether a new sanction will create a backlash against our national-security, foreign-policy, and humanitarian goals? All these questions—as well as consideration of effective alternatives—are too often overlooked.

The Lugar-Hamilton legislation is not intended to prevent future use of unilateral or multilateral sanctions, nor will it end present-day sanctions. Rather, it establishes a process to ensure that policymakers implement any new sanctions with their eyes wide open.

Unfortunately, Abrams conveniently overlooks these arguments and many others in his broad-brush defense of sanctions. Even more troubling is the claim that "the elimination of economic sanctions would leave our government facing its adversaries with just two alternatives: words and war." This is a simplistic view that overlooks the array of diplomatic, political, economic, cultural, and military tools that U.S. policymakers have to implement foreign policy.

To disregard the benefits of engagement in favor of attempts at isolation also ignores the realities of today's global economy. Proponents of a sanctions-based foreign policy need to face the fact that unilateral sanctions are usually ineffective because there are multiple sources and markets to which a nation can turn to meet its needs. History has shown that cutting America out of the equation is usually not effective in influencing behavior. If, however, we go into the situation having analyzed both the costs and potential gains of a proposed sanction, and we decide that sanctions are the right thing to do despite the costs—so be it.

That's all we ask. Eyes open, informed decisions.

FRANK D. KITTREDGE
VICE CHAIRMAN
USA*ENGAGE
WASHINGTON, DC

ELLIOTT ABRAMS RESPONDS: ***Right now USA*Engage is promoting a trade mission to Cuba and does not support sanctions even in the case of the infamous SLORC in Myanmar. This makes the notion that all the organization wants is "eyes open, informed decisions" rather hard to credit. To the extent that its internal memos have surfaced in the press, they are not full of thoughtful cost-benefit analyses of proposed sanctions; they are instead tactical guides to how to kill off sanctions against even the most gruesome human-rights violators.***

I did not treat Lugar and Hamilton "cavalierly" or dismiss them, nor did I imply that they are less than honorable men. I just disagreed with them. Their legislation puts a thousand procedural roadblocks in the way of imposing any sanctions. Invoking their names is not a policy argument.

Kittredge says that I was "simplistic" in holding that the alternatives are words and war if we abandon economic sanctions. He then goes on to say the other options are "diplomatic, political, economic, cultural, and military tools." Military tools are precisely what I meant in the shorthand phrase "war." Economic tools include sanctions and other forms of trade and financial pressure (i.e., the elements of economic warfare), all of which I favor; but which of these would Kittredge really back when push came to shove? Political and diplomatic pressures are fine, but how effective will they be if not backed by the clear prospect of economic or military moves? As for "cultural" pressure and the likelihood that it will change the behavior of the savage rulers of places like Myanmar, Iraq, and Cuba, well, I'll stick with sanctions.

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Casual

Guns 'n' Poses

When I was 11, my family got lost in rural Tennessee and stopped at a fireworks store to get directions. Mom pulled our Honda stationwagon with its Garden State plates into the dirt parking lot, and I went in to ask the way to the Hungry Mother Campground. The woman behind the counter was overweight and heavily tattooed, and a strange flag was hanging above her on the wall: the Stars and Bars with a flaming skull in the center encircled by the words "The South Shall Rise Again." It was my first encounter with the Confederacy.

Suburban Yankees are always secretly surprised by regional differences, probably because we spend our formative years learning to think of cultural contrast as the difference between the Gap and Aéropostale. I'm trying to shed this narrowness—I've been to Graceland, I love fried green tomatoes, and recently I even saw *Gone with the Wind*. Then a couple of weeks ago I got the urge to break one of the biggest Yankee taboos. I decided I wanted to learn how to use a gun.

My first problem was knowing what to wear. Is shooting formal or casual? Can I wear sneakers, I wondered? Is camouflage required? In the end I settled on khakis and a navy polo shirt—an outfit that said, "I can use the Glock, or we could go grab a latte."

I located a gun store with a shooting range attached someplace well outside the Beltway, and when I got there, I was relieved not to see anyone who looked like David Koresh. I stepped up to the counter and told the clerk that I wanted to rent a gun and get a lane to do some shooting. I confessed, "I know nothing about guns."

He gave me a pained look and asked, "Revolver or semi-automatic?"

I opted for the semi-automatic because that's what Samuel L. Jackson uses in *Pulp Fiction*, one of my favorite movies. The clerk showed me a case with about 25 pistols in it. I asked him to pick one for me, and he pulled out a Smith & Wesson 9mm, which pleased me immensely because it sounded so menacing. Then he produced a sheet of paper and instructed me to sign by the X.

The form attested that I was familiar with the safe operation of firearms and that my knowledge of gun laws, both state and federal, was comprehensive. I crossed my fingers and signed, thinking what a great story this would be if I were a producer for *60 Minutes*.

As I passed the piece of paper back to the man, he handed me my Smith & Wesson, a pair of earphones, and a box of ammo.

"You have lane ten," he said.

I spent the first half hour in my lane playing with the gun. I pressed all of the buttons and moved all of the moving parts, trying to figure out what went where. I decided that robbing convenience stores must be harder than it looks, because I was getting nowhere fast.

A pair of 12-year-olds in the next lane over were firing enough bullets to conduct a small war, with the sort of solemn, dedicated expressions you'd expect to see on the faces of kids aspiring to the *Sturmabteilung*. I stepped back and watched them for a few minutes as they effortlessly put round after round into a tiny black star on a square target 30 feet away.

When one of them caught me staring, I had a brief vision of him pointing his silver Luger at me and coolly saying, "This is for the War of Northern Aggression, Mister," before filling me full of lead. Instead, he gave me a polite, toothy, adolescent smile and asked if I needed any help.

After five minutes' instruction, I was ready. I stepped into my lane and flipped a switch that sent my target—a big one, in the shape of a man—25 feet out. With one swift motion I slammed a full clip into the grip, jerked a round into the chamber, flicked off the safety, and—Bang!

Well, it wasn't quite the stuff of Delta Force, but I did hit the target. As a matter of fact, I hit it more often than not. I was even starting to fancy myself a good ol' boy by the time my 50 rounds ran out. I felt elated, suffused with an unfamiliar destructive exuberance.

But the feeling soon wore off. As I drove back toward the city, past miles of cookie-cutter developments, my euphoria subsided, and I realized I'd been play-acting. The people I met at the range go shooting because they enjoy it. I went to pose as a southerner.

And I shed the pose as easily as I would shed an ill-fitting pair of chinos. It turns out you can take the boy out of the mall, but you can't take the mall out of . . . well, you know. Hey, I've got to run to Starbucks.

Jonathan V. Last

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the weekly Standard

A Sorry President

Officially, at least, the White House line remains that President Clinton's August 17 mea-sorta-culpa speech achieved a thoroughgoing catharsis on the Monica Lewinsky matter—both for him personally and for all America. He has been "quite heartened by the reaction," Clinton surreally suggested at his Moscow press conference last Wednesday, and while he will "continue to go through this personal process in an appropriate way," it is otherwise "time for us to now go back to the work of the country and the people."

The president's intended work schedule is already taking shape. This week Clinton will attend a White House-organized prayer breakfast with "religious leaders," all of them no doubt hand-picked for their willingness to refrain from comment on the president's observance of the Seventh Commandment. Next week, he will kick off a nationwide swing of big-dollar DNC fund-raisers. The week after that, Clinton will lead—ably and enablingly supported by his wife, Vice President Gore, and the prime ministers of Britain and Italy—a day-long seminar on global economics at New York University Law School. Just as if nothing had happened. Monica who?

Trouble is, few other politicians travel so imperturbably from fiction to fiction as William Jefferson Clinton. And congressional Democrats, without whom the president's "back to work" efforts won't amount to spit, haven't yet recovered from the passing of Chapter One, during which everyone pretended it wasn't for sure that Clinton *did* have sex with the intern. That basic lie has now been exploded—by the president himself—and the explosion obviously does not feel like cathartic release. No, it just plain hurts.

On September 1, Senate Democrats held their first weekly luncheon of the fall congressional session. The meeting, ostensibly devoted to the party's "substantive policy agenda," seems actually to have been absorbed entirely with strategizing over the Lewinsky fiasco. What to do? *The people's business*, minority leader Tom Daschle gamely told reporters when he finally emerged, ducking the Monica question and feigning optimism. But back in the lunch room, a page of scribbled notes left behind by one careless Democratic senator revealed the only true mood. In the middle of this sheet, in big, block letters emphasized by stabbing arrows, appeared three words: "WE ARE DOOMED."

Two days later, the disquiet burst into view when Joe Lieberman of Connecticut, a Clinton friend of nearly 30 years' standing, took to the Senate floor to excoriate the president for his behavior—and to carpet-bomb the main White House defense. Clinton's Lewinsky affair, Lieberman insisted, is not a mildly "inappropriate" and safely "private" misadventure; it is "disgraceful" and "immoral," and the president's bad example has "profound public consequences." Nor is it possible, Lieberman went on, for the nation simply "to move on and get this matter behind us." Clinton's "transgressions"—including his "intentional and premeditated decision" to deceive the country for seven long months—are grave enough to require "some measure of public rebuke and accountability."

Forced to respond to this attack the next day, Clinton, in Ireland, said, "I have nothing else to say" beyond what "I've already said": that "I'm sorry about it." Which, in fact, he *hadn't* previously said. "Basically," the president fibbed, "I agree with what [Lieberman] said."

"Basically," however, Clinton doesn't agree with Lieberman at all, and he isn't very sorry, either. Not sorry enough to accept a congressional resolution of reprimand or censure, for example, the minimum "public rebuke" Lieberman seems to consider appropriate. Last Friday's *Washington Post* reported that the White House will vigorously and vehemently contest, as fundamentally undeserved, *any* form of official sanction for the Lewinsky scandal.

In the short term, it appears, the White House will fight this battle by time-tested Clintonian means. There will be, above all, a smear campaign against the president's current and potential critics. Lieberman, of course, is a man of cautious and moderate temperament, so he is presumably beyond reproach. But hardly anyone else is safe from White House slime.

Shortly after retiring representative Paul McHale of Pennsylvania became the first congressional Democrat to call for the president's resignation, CNBC hack Geraldo Rivera "got a call from my source very close to President Clinton who reminded me that there was a controversy about Rep. McHale's candor in terms of the medals he won in the armed forces of the United States." This "controversy," it soon turned out, was

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imaginary. So the next day, Rivera invented a new one, citing the *Navy Times* to substantiate a charge that McHale had once exaggerated his military duties in Operation Desert Storm. This, too, proved false; *Navy Times* has never reported any such thing. But Rivera was undeterred, waving before the cameras old copies of the Allentown *Morning Call*—which "attested," he alleged, to a genuine past "dispute" over the congressman's war record. That paper has since editorially condemned Rivera as "dishonest."

Never mind. On August 27, after conferring with his big brother, Roger Clinton told CNN's Larry King that "some of the political people" contemplating a denunciation of the president had "best watch themselves because of the old glass-house story." Be "very careful," Roger warned. The following day, the White House-friendly Internet tabloid *Salon* posted a farrago of sexual innuendoes about Newt Gingrich on its Web site. Then, almost immediately, word began circulating through Washington that Clinton allies were aiding and abetting a forthcoming *Vanity Fair* story on Rep. Dan Burton's sex life. And at almost exactly the same moment, a reporter we know got a telephone call from a high-level White House official who suggested that the reporter take a look at the sexual practices of still another prominent congressional Republican.

Paul McHale, for his part, thinks he knows who's running this disgusting operation. "I suspect this individual is a nationally known figure very close to the president," he says. "I have a very good idea who it is." So do we. The man who called our reporter acquaintance was Sidney Blumenthal.

While all this mud is being slung, the White House is also busily leaking—and preemptively spinning—whatever damaging disclosures it imagines might be contained in Kenneth Starr's forthcoming report to Congress. The leaks involve highly selective accounts of various incriminating sequences of events. And the explanations so far offered for these events—by unnamed "Clinton advisers"—strain credulity. Even so, interesting details continually emerge.

Consider, for instance, the new administration-approved version of its job-search efforts on Monica Lewinsky's behalf. Clinton, it turns out, was involved from the start. Early last year, he asked deputy personnel chief Marsha Scott to interview Lewinsky for a possible return assignment at the White House. And in the second such interview, Scott's lawyer has told the *Washington Post*, Lewinsky bitterly complained about her banishment to the Pentagon. "I never had an affair with the president," she said, "but all the others who have get to stay."

All the others who had affairs with the president? This is exculpatory?

Yuck. Joe Lieberman wants Congress to defy the president's wishes and proceed in a "deliberate and responsible" manner with official consideration of the way Bill Clinton has debased the nation's highest office. We want that, too. The key question, though, is precisely *when* this inquiry will begin in earnest.

Neither party, assuming the Starr report is delivered in the next couple of weeks, is instinctively eager to get underway. Democrats want to conduct their fall campaigns with as little Lewinsky static as possible. Republicans are convinced that things are going just fine, thank you, and are concerned that any pre-election hearings on the scandal might tar them with the brush of "excessive partisanship." Both parties, in other words, by standard calculations, have every incentive to accept the Starr report, refer it to the House Judiciary Committee, and then not do anything serious about it until the new Congress convenes after New Year's Day.

But this is what cannot be allowed to happen. Sen. Lieberman says his "feelings of disappointment and anger" with the president "have not dissipated" over time. In this respect, let's face it, he is an unusual man. America has shown a quite shocking capacity to dull itself to "old news" about Bill Clinton. By January, even a devastating report from the independent counsel may well seem both old and dull, and therefore not worth acting on. Which phenomenon—the psychology of delay—is exactly what the White House is counting on as its best hope to prevent a formal censure of the president. Or worse.

Lieberman was right to insist on "public rebuke and accountability" for the president's behavior in the Lewinsky scandal. This magazine has already expressed its judgment that Clinton's conduct falls beneath the *de minimus* standards of the presidency. But Congress, as an institution, speaks for the country as a whole, and its elected officials, before they join such a judgment, will want to wait for full documentary evidence. Fair enough—with one important proviso.

When the Starr report finally appears, the waiting period should end at once. The House Judiciary Committee should begin its deliberations immediately. It should quickly make available to other members of Congress and the public as much information as possible. This difficult work will take time, and the committee should have such time as it needs; Newt Gingrich should consider keeping the House in session for most of October—and beyond—if necessary. And if it all interrupts or diverts attention from the fall reelection campaign . . . well then, so be it.

For, really, after all: Our president's fitness for office is in serious doubt. There is no more important question that today confronts the Congress—and the American people.

—David Tell, for the Editors

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Smearing Scott Ritter

by Matthew Rees

A HALLMARK OF THE Clinton administration is the personal smear. Billy Dale, Linda Tripp, Paul McHale—all tarred because they interfered with President Clinton and his objectives.

The latest casualty is Scott Ritter, the U.N. arms inspector who resigned on August 26, charging that the administration had repeatedly blocked his efforts to do his job in Iraq. The administration response was swift: Within hours, CBS was reporting that Ritter was under investigation by the FBI for sharing information with Israel. The *Washington Post* carried the same news—in two separate articles—the next day.

The leak was a reminder that the Clintonites will go after just about anyone who has become inconvenient to them. Only seven months ago, the administration almost went to war with Iraq because Ritter had been prevented from searching for weapons of mass destruction. But as soon as he criticized Clinton policy, he found his integrity—and his patriotism—under attack. Secretary of state Madeleine Albright even hissed in a September 1 interview on CNN that Ritter "doesn't have a clue about what our overall policy has been."

Here's what happened: In January, Ritter was told by colleagues that the FBI, at the behest of the CIA, had launched an investigation into whether he had improperly shared information with other governments. The investigation was—and is—widely believed to be nothing more than a bureaucratic squabble involving turf-conscious CIA men. This conclusion was supported by the administration's refusal to take action against Ritter, even though he was operating in a highly sensitive environment.

Kevin Chadwick

Scott Ritter

The FBI never contacted Ritter about the allegations. In fact, it still hasn't. Indeed, the bureau has never even confirmed the existence of the investigation. Seeking some answers, Ritter had his boss, Richard Butler (chairman of the U.N. Special Commission on Iraq), complain to national-security adviser Sandy Berger and U.N. ambassador Bill Richardson about what was happening. Both men begged off, pleading that they were powerless to act over a law-enforcement matter.

Ritter got some good news a couple of months ago when he was shown a letter from the CIA general counsel's office to the Justice Department. The letter explained that any information Ritter had shared with other governments was authorized. (Holding no security clearance, Ritter has no access to classified information.) Later, Ritter was informed by intelligence officials who had spoken with the FBI that the inquiry was closed, with no wrongdoing uncovered.

But as we now know, this assessment was premature. One top intelligence source, who has experience in nuclear inspections, says that he has always found an investigation of Ritter laughable. The source further says that he was flabbergasted when the fact of the investigation appeared in media reports. There is no doubt, he says, that this was Ritter's payback for going public with complaints about the Clinton administration.

So who is responsible for the leak? The intelligence community is awash in theories, with senior aides to Albright and Richardson tagged as the likeliest suspects. THE WEEKLY STANDARD has learned, however, that a Pentagon official was the source for at least one reporter.

That the Defense Department would be unleashed to besmirch Ritter's reputation is hardly surprising. Top Pentagon officials acknowledged earlier this year that they had leaked damaging information from Linda Tripp's security file. In all likelihood, the culprit in the Ritter case will never be found, much less punished—even as no one has been disciplined in the Tripp matter—but the illegal disclosure has aroused the anger of at least two senators, Richard Shelby and Bob Kerrey, the leading Republican and Democrat on the intelligence committee. Together, they sent a letter to Berger and other cabinet officials on September 4 demanding an investigation.

Regardless of the outcome, the administration's short-term objective has been achieved: Ritter's credi-

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bility is in dispute. Appearing on ABC's *This Week*, Carter national-security adviser Zbigniew Brzezinski wondered mischievously whether Ritter "has his own agenda in this matter." The charges against Ritter are almost certainly baseless, and he has enough stature to win his reputation back. Unfortunately, not every victim of the Clinton smear team is so lucky.

Matthew Rees is a staff writer for THE WEEKLY STANDARD.

THE DOW OF SOCIAL SECURITY

by David Frum

WE CAN'T READ THEIR MINDS, of course, but the hoary defenders of the Social Security status quo would have had to be superhuman not to cheer as the stock market slid through the last week of August and then crashed on the 31st. For years they have endured the complaints of young taxpayers that Social Security is a cheat: While private retirement accounts have sometimes grown at annual rates of 30 to 40 percent during the nineties, Social Security will pay out zero percent returns to today's thirty-somethings and sub-zero percent to today's twenty-somethings. So for rear-guard defenders of Social Security, a good old-fashioned Wall Street panic must have seemed the answer to a prayer: A cataclysmic collapse of their 401K plans will teach these greedy youngsters that there are worse things than the slow and steady evaporation of one's Social Security contributions.

Alas for the mossbacks, the Dow quickly stabilized at 15 percent or so below its peak, leaving almost all of the fantastic gains of the mid-'90s bull market intact. But sooner or later the mossbacks will have their day. Like all bull markets, the great bull market of the 1990s will end, either in a terrific crash or simply by petering out. Advocates of Social Security privatization had better factor that into their plans.

It's true that the end of the bull will make no difference to the economic case for privatization. Whatever happens on Wall Street, the plight of Social Security is unchanged: Around 2010, the federal government will no longer be able to afford the current level of benefits at the current level of taxation. But the end of the bull may very well weaken the political case for privatization. In 1997, it was obvious why it would be better to put 12 percent of your pay into the market than into the palsied hands of the Social Security Administration. In 1999, it may be less obvious.

Over the past decade, advocates of privatization have acted on the belief that time is on their side. Every year, high schools and colleges graduate a fresh class of Social Security losers, and funeral homes bury another cohort of Social Security winners. Why struggle and toil now for reform when in a decade or two it will be politically riskless? Privatizers have tended to believe too that Social Security reform ought to wait for the election of a Republican president.

The August '98 stock-market collapse should prompt recognition that there are indeed risks in delay. Political opportunities are rare and fleeting things, and when they vanish they do not always reappear. For privatizers, the mid-'90s have been just such an opportunity. The planets are aligned: The stock market is booming (dramatizing the superiority of private markets over government insurance), the budget is in surplus (which means that there is cash on hand to pay the costs of the transition from a pay-as-you-go pension system to a fully funded system), and the Democratic party is in one of its business-oriented moments. Who knows how long those conditions will last?

SOCIAL SECURITY PRIVATIZATION IS THE U.S. EQUIVALENT OF MRS. THATCHER'S SALE OF COUNCIL HOUSING. IT WILL TURN DEPENDENTS INTO OWNERS.

Yes, it's true that the political clamor for doing something about Social Security will grow louder as the crisis nears. But it's also true that the nearer the crisis grows, the more costly and painful that "something" will have to be. Worse, the nearer the crisis grows, the less time there will be for the money that will be put into the market to compound. The first baby-boomer retirement is now only 13 years away.

The clock is ticking in another sense, too. Unlike President Clinton's Democrats, the party of Dick Morris's multitudes of mini-ideas, the Republicans are the party of a few big ideas. The party is now wrestling with the question of what its next big idea should be.

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Ought it to be radical tax reform and big tax cuts? If so, there will be little time and energy left over for Social Security reform—especially since one of the favorite arguments of the radical tax reformers is that their low, flat income tax will so boost the U.S. economy that the old unreformed Social Security system will suddenly seem affordable. (Which is why Steve Forbes's 1996 tax plan, which so dramatically pledged to eliminate income taxes for lower-income families, quietly left in place the much more onerous payroll tax on those families.) If, on the other hand, the Republicans choose to make an issue of Social Security, tax reform will inevitably sink into second place. That's why the tax reformers get so grouchy when anyone gets too earnest about fixing the Social Security system: Recently, the *Wall Street Journal*'s Paul Gigot used his column to administer a stinging rebuke to Sen. Phil Gramm for just this offense. And since the tax-reform option is the one most appealing to risk-averse Republicans—Who ever saw his poll numbers drop for proposing to cut taxes?—sheer inertia suggests that the longer Social Security reform is postponed, the less appealing it will become to Republicans.

In other words, time may not in fact be on the reformers' side. Reform may be most feasible when memories of the bull are still fresh and hopes for its return are strong. This question of timing becomes all the more urgent if the tax reformers are wrong and it is indeed Social Security that is the most important economic issue for conservatives. Make no mistake: Low tax rates are wonderful things. But Social Security privatization is the American equivalent of Mrs. Thatcher's sale of council housing—a social reform that will transform millions of voters from dependents into owners. The partisans of the Social Security status quo understand this: Increasingly they defend the rattletrap old system not in economic terms but as the last bulwark of collectivist ideals.

Proponents of reform should be at least as open-eyed—should understand that this is the one reform that will install self-reliance at the very center of the American economic constitution. Tax rates fluctuate. But Social Security reform will create a permanent political majority in favor of sound money, corporate profitability, and a free economy. The fact that such a majority happens to be in place now should not blind us to the possibility that it could very well vanish. And last week's market turmoil is a warning that it could vanish with stunning rapidity. If Republicans miss the opportunity to reform Social Security now, they may never get the chance again.

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GEPHARDT VS. CLINTON

by Christopher Caldwell

Merrimack, N.H.

PETER FLOOD'S A NO-HOPER. He became the Democratic nominee for Congress from New Hampshire's first district when the original candidate was found to have assaulted a state cop. He's oratorically clumsy, short on money, and sure to get clocked by Republican incumbent John Sununu Jr. on Election Day. And yet the whole national media—CNN, Fox News, the *New York Times*, the *Washington Post*—gathered in Merrimack, N.H., last Thursday for the opening of Flood's campaign headquarters in an old caboose that used to be a head shop.

Of course, they hadn't the slightest interest in Flood. House minority leader Richard Gephardt had come to New Hampshire to pitch a Democratic "kitchen-table agenda" of three issues: education, a patient's bill of rights, and using the budget surplus for Social Security. But nobody wanted to talk about that, either. In an interview that made the front page of the *Washington Post* two weeks ago, Gephardt described President Clinton's conduct with Monica Lewinsky as "wrong and reprehensible" and expressed his hope that future impeachment proceedings would be as fair as previous ones. Over the following days, he appeared to backtrack, but did not withdraw his statement, leaving much of the media at sea over what his position was. He arrived fresh from a nine-state, fourteen-district campaign tour, at every stop of which he faced journalists asking him to clarify his position on the Monica Lewinsky affair. If this canny politician has not cleared things up by now, it's because he doesn't want to.

Gephardt added two new wrinkles: On a day when several Democrats, from Robert Torricelli to Marcy Kaptur, described the president's August 17 mea-not-so-culpa as "insufficient," one staffer said, "Dick thought it was sufficient. He thought it took a lot of courage." And standing outside an old-folks home in Manchester, Gephardt attacked Republicans for dashing the hopes of fair play he had raised days

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before. "They're not talking to us," he said. "I read in the paper that Gerry Solomon's writing a rule [for impeachment hearings]. I don't know that. I don't know whether it's true or not. Nobody's talked to me, nobody's talked to John Conyers, nobody's talked to Joe Moakley. If they do this the way they've done just about everything else in the last three years, this will not be non-partisan."

Gephardt acknowledges that he has had one conversation with the president since the "reprehensible" interview—an "upbeat" talk "about the issues" the weekend before the Moscow summit. He's more forthcoming about his chat with White House chief of staff Erskine Bowles. On the Lewinsky matter, he says, "I told [Bowles] what I've told everybody, and that is, I've been saying the same thing every day." Gephardt says there is no contradiction between any of his public statements, leaving us with this position on the matter: *The president's behavior was reprehensible, but his apology was sufficient. Impeachment is a possibility, but protecting the process from Republican partisanship is unlikely.*

Dick Gephardt

Kevin Chadwick

Is Gephardt simply trying to work out a way for Democrats to talk about Lewinsky without damaging themselves? If he does, he'll win the gratitude of party regulars around the country. "You can't suck and blow at the same time," is the strange way New Hampshire state party chairman Jeff Woodburn puts it, "and it does make it difficult to get our message out." Clinton was invited to the state August 15. But a scheduling conflict arose with the president's grand-jury testimony, and while Woodburn says that the president has an "open invitation," neither side has shown itself eager to carry it out.

Which leaves the field to Gephardt, who fires up New Hampshire Democrats with visions of taking the House back. He thinks six open Republican seats are already in the bag, say staff, and he's willing to name them: Lydia Spottswood will pick up Mark Neumann's seat in Wisconsin; pro-life Dem Pat Casey will get the Pennsylvania seat long held by Joe McDade; Brian Baird will fill the seat vacated by Washington populist Linda Smith's Senate run; Shelley Berkley will take John Ensign's Nevada seat; Mike Thompson is home free in the seat vacated by the retirement of Northern California wild man Frank Riggs; and Ronnie Shows's private polling has him thrashing Republican Delbert Hosemann in Mississippi. Does Gephardt, alone among political observers, think Democrats still have a chance of getting the House back, if only candidates can put enough daylight between themselves and Clinton?

No. None of Gephardt's six candidates (except Casey) is more than a "maybe," and his calculation does not reckon with the Democrats' vulnerable seats.

But this is not really congressional politics we're witnessing. It's presidential—not about Clinton's future but Gephardt's. Last spring, Gephardt attacked the White House in a speech at Harvard for having no domestic agenda. Nothing has changed in the interim, and yet Gephardt now looks content to make the party agenda his own. All wings of it: Barnstorming through New Hampshire on the very afternoon the Russian economy suffered its worst day since communism fell, he refused to stress his historic differences with the president on the global economy except to excoriate Republican irresponsibility. "One of the issues we have been talking about," he says, "is the failure of the Republicans to replenish the funding for the IMF"—this from a man who has taken a dim view of arrangements to bail out global capitalists at the expense of workers.

Having described the president as "morally reprehensible," Gephardt will now do nothing to break the unity of the party or its candidates. Why would he want to? President Clinton is hiding from scandal abroad; Vice President Gore hid from reporters on his recent campaigning tour through Ohio. Of the top three figures in the Democratic party, Gephardt is the only one not on the ethical disabled list. Of the

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Democrats aggressively campaigning, Gephardt is top dog. Whether or not the triad of Social Security/Patient's Bill of Rights/Education is a winner, Democrats think it is. A year from now, when the primary campaign heats up, Gephardt must hope he will be the one remembered for having tramped from one end of New Hampshire to the other to pitch it. Monica Lewinsky has opened up magnificent vistas for Richard Gephardt.

Even if he's the only person in the world who can't say so.

Christopher Caldwell is senior writer at THE WEEKLY STANDARD.

LET TAIWAN IN

by Thomas J. Duesterberg

THE U.S. ECONOMY AND FINANCIAL MARKETS are now beginning to reel from the crisis in Asia that has spread throughout the developing world. As the crisis lingers and deepens, many of Asia's leaders are questioning the value of globalization and open markets.

The response of the Clinton administration has been less than helpful. The president's visit to China prompted a showy but failed effort by the U.S. Treasury to prop up Japan's currency. And despite Clinton's fawning courtesy to his Beijing hosts, China's offer to remove a few barriers to trade as part of its effort to join the World Trade Organization was, according to the U.S.-trade-representative spokesman, "not responsive to U.S. interests."

Clearly, a more effective policy response is needed to stem the rising tide against the liberal international economic order in Asia. A subtle but meaningful step would be to allow Taiwan, the orphan of the administration's Asia policy, into the World Trade Organization. As the Republic of China, Taiwan was an original member of the GATT, the WTO's precursor, but it lost its seat when Beijing swung back into the orbit of the West. Its efforts to rejoin have been stymied by the opposition of the Communist mainland.

President Clinton has so far acceded to the Beijing's hostility to Taiwan's entry into the WTO. But a realistic assessment of U.S. interests shows the value of reversing course. Moving quickly to grant Taiwanese membership in the WTO would give a boost to U.S. exporters, especially the foundering farm sector; it would send a signal that political and economic liberalization will be rewarded by Washington; it would help redress the balance in U.S. relations with Asia that the Sino-centric tilt in the president's trip to Beijing upset; and it would provide inoculation against a drift toward economic nationalism in Asia.

It would certainly be a shot in the arm to America's manufacturers and farmers to see Taiwan in the WTO. Taiwan is already one of our largest foreign markets, taking in over $20 billion in goods annually, 80 percent more than China. The economic miracle in Taiwan has produced per capita income of nearly $15,000, allowing annual purchases of almost $1,000 per capita of U.S. goods. In 1996, Taiwan bought more than $2 billion in agricultural products, $3 billion in electronic parts, $2.3 billion in chemicals, and nearly $500 million in data-processing equipment. In the last year, Taiwan has literally been an island of economic stability amid a continent in chaos, as its economy grows at 6 percent with a sound currency.

Despite these massive imports, Taiwan has protected markets in some sectors, a legacy of the economic nationalism and export-led strategy that prevailed in the past. Tariffs of over 40 percent are maintained on agricultural products such as fruit; the effective tax on imported automobiles is 60-100 percent. Import licensing is still required on hundreds of goods.

In return for admission to the World Trade Organization, Taiwan has agreed to reduce its tariff on agricultural products to 12 percent by 2002 and to lift its ban on imported pork and chicken. Tariffs on automobiles would be gradually reduced to 20 percent. The chemicals, computer, finance, and telecommunications industries would also benefit by Taiwanese adoption of the WTO's free-trade disciplines. But the gains would be most dramatic for farmers, who have witnessed a 20 percent decline this year in sales to Asia, our largest export market by far for these products.

In addition to aiding U.S. exporters, accelerating Taiwanese entry into the WTO would send important signals to our trading partners and allies. Taiwan has evolved from an authoritarian, underdeveloped, and mercantilist economy to a fully democratic, prosperous, and much more open one in the short space of two decades. It has signed detailed agreements with 23 of 26 of the WTO parties with substantial interest in its accession. Only the United States and Europe, bowing to pressure from Beijing, have yet to sign accession agreements, despite having resolved nearly all substantive issues. Taiwan has further agreed to

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enter the WTO as a customs territory (similar to Hong Kong), undercutting any legalistic argument from China against entry as an independent nation.

Since Taiwan meets all conceivable tests for admission, we should politely inform Beijing that Taiwanese membership in the World Trade Organization will strengthen the very international economic order the People's Republic of China itself seems so eager to join. Then we should work to complete Taiwan's accession without reference to the stalled application of Beijing. U.S. trade negotiators could also suggest that the development of Taiwan provides an excellent example of what the international economic order is meant to promote, and offers valuable lessons to the mainland—especially the fruitful link between market economies and democracy.

Allowing Taiwan to enter the WTO would not only partially redress the U.S. tilt toward China, which is a matter of concern to nations as diverse as Japan, India, and Thailand; it would reaffirm the U.S. commitment to global trade liberalization. Resisting Beijing's importuning that China should enter the WTO on concessionary terms also reinforces the message that economic (and not political) criteria are paramount for membership in the WTO.

Opening the World Trade Organization to Taiwan would be only a small step toward solving the Asian economic crisis, granted. But it would help combat the pessimism that impedes sound economic decision-making and facilitates a slide into protectionism. Such a slide in the 1930s had disastrous consequences. It is time for the U.S. to show leadership in strengthening the liberal economic order that has served the world so well, while at the same time doing some good for constituencies like domestic farmers and Asian Tiger nations that are recent converts to that order.

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Tax Reform: Fantasy & Reality

by John Hood

If you believe Republican politicians and others in the conservative movement, the issue of tax reform is a sure winner. The debate, it is said, is not about whether tax reform will cross the finish line in the next few years, but about which horse—the flat tax or the national sales tax—is the safer bet.

I think we need to find a better wager. I doubt that either a flat tax or a national sales tax will pass Congress. Indeed, I'm surprised by the degree to which policy wonks and politicians in safe seats have dominated the tax-reform debate and steered it toward theory and fancy.

Here's the most important thing to remember: Opponents—be they special interests or populist demagogues—will not be responding primarily to the notion of a single tax rate on income or sales. They will instead be hollering about the more complicated issue of how to define the tax base, regardless of the rates.

Tax reform must necessarily pick fights with powerful interests, such as doctors, lawyers, realtors, insurance agents, and bankers. There's no way around that, at least if reformers are to stay true to their principles. The reason is simple: Both the flat tax and the national sales tax would expand the scope of federal taxation to forms of economic activity that now escape it.

The flat tax, for example, would sweep away the current bias in the tax code that favors health insurance, managed care, and other third-party payers of medical bills. More broadly, non-wage benefits given to employees currently escape tax on both the workers and the firms. This is a major reason that non-wage benefits have grown significantly as a share of total worker compensation over the past several decades.

All flat-tax proposals would end this bias by subjecting non-wage benefits to the business tax. A dollar of health-insurance premiums would be taxed the same way as a dollar of wages paid directly to workers. But expanding taxation to include managed-care contracts, employer-provided life insurance, day-care assistance, and other non-wage compensation will make lots of industries and professions hopping mad. They are benefiting from a screwy tax code; they know it; and they'll fight hard to keep it that way.

Advocates of the national sales tax might view this problem as an argument against income taxation. But their own plan creates even worse problems. A sales tax would have no choice but to tax services, such as legal assistance, medical care, child care, and investment advice. That is the only way to bring in enough revenue to levy a relatively low (15 to 20 percent) rate.

Service industries—including law firms and health-care providers—represent about one-fifth of

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private economic output, a huge and growing share of total employment, and tremendous clout in Washington and state capitals. Throw in the financial-services industry and the realtors, and you have a recipe for political disaster. Not even its function as a sizable import duty would give the sales tax enough industry support to fly.

Proponents of the flat tax and national sales tax have fallen all over themselves explaining why adopting a single rate is fair. Flat-taxers say that theirs is the only way to treat everyone equally and to reduce economic distortions caused by punitive rates. At the same time, many of them promise generous family deductions to make the system *effectively* progressive while *marginally* flat. National-sales-taxers promise rebates for poor taxpayers to accomplish the same objective.

Both groups are missing the point. According to opinion polls, people generally agree with the idea that someone making twice as much income as they should pay twice as much tax. A single marginal rate doesn't concern them nearly as much as the possibility that rich "coupon-clippers" whose income derives mainly from investments will escape tax altogether.

Now, economists who back the flat tax or national sales tax will argue that their plans do tax investors—the flat tax by taxing profits and interest payments at the business level, the sales tax at the point when the investor spends the money. But arguments such as "I'm paying my taxes at the business level" or "I'll pay my taxes 10 years from now when I buy a yacht" don't have much political value. If you don't believe me, try them out on your friends.

I suspect average taxpayers want to be reassured that, every year, rich investors will have to fill out a form and send it (and possibly a check) to the tax collector, just as they themselves will. For any tax reform to have political legs, it must guarantee that all Americans interact with the tax system in a roughly equivalent fashion, even if they are, for various reasons, paying different effective rates on their income.

Tax reform remains a critical issue and a viable way of galvanizing the conservative coalition. But the answer is not to construct an intricate new system that must be passed intact. Tax reformers should instead settle on a few discrete goals and design modest proposals that have political constituencies of their own. Here are a few ideas:

Focus on payroll taxes. For many, if not most, taxpayers, payroll tax for Social Security, Medicare, and unemployment insurance is greater than the federal tax liability. Remember that the bottom 50 percent of Americans pay an average effective federal income-tax rate of about 4.5 percent. They don't have a big personal stake in income-tax reform (or at least are unlikely to perceive such a stake).

The notion of diverting some payroll taxes into personal savings accounts, or trading cuts in payroll taxes for cuts in future benefits, may well generate wider enthusiasm than a flat tax or national sales tax. The benefits are easier to understand, and they accrue directly to taxpayers in the form of dollars or assets. Another option would be to make payroll taxes deductible on federal income-tax returns.

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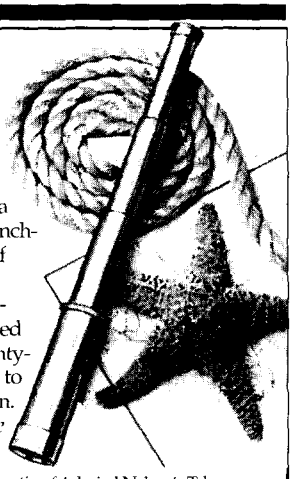

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Focus on savings. The complicated tax cuts of 1997 were modest and mostly wrongheaded, but they demonstrated the political value of designing tax cuts so that they have powerful constituencies. The idea of making college tuition tax-deductible and giving out additional tax credits for some students and their families was a half-solution at best, but brilliant politics. It attracted the support of academia, CPAs, financial advisers, and the investment industry. Is there a way for the Right to pursue a similar course without surrendering its principles?

Absolutely. Provisions in last year's budget deal allow "back-ended" IRAs for higher-education savings as well as penalty-free IRA withdrawals for college tuition, medical expenses, and mortgage deposits. Because the initial deposits in these accounts are not tax-deductible, the tax benefits are limited to tax-deferred interest or capital gains.

Far simpler to explain—and far better as economic and social policy—would be the creation of educational savings accounts (ESAs) that would not only exempt earnings from tax but allow families to take tax deductions for deposits and pay no tax on withdrawals. ESAs could be used to fund all educational expenses, from preschool to graduate school to even job training. In effect, private education savings and spending at all levels would become tax-free.

This is justifiable on tax-policy grounds. One of the defects of the flat tax (and the national sales tax, if applied to all goods and services) is that it is unfair to investment in human capital. While plant, equipment, or other physical capital would receive tax deductions—on the appropriate grounds that to do anything less is double taxation, because earnings on the investments are also taxed—investments in human capital such as education and training, which also generate future taxable income, would continue to get taxed two or three times. Giving at least a limited tax exemption to education spending and savings is, in fact, to enforce tax neutrality between present and future consumption.

The ESA is not the only way to cut taxes by creating rather than alienating political constituencies. Medical savings accounts, home-ownership accounts, and unemployment savings accounts (to replace the current, deeply flawed unemployment insurance system) would naturally attract the political support of the financial institutions and mutual funds likely to manage this money, as well as the industries—such as health care and real estate—from which savers would eventually purchase services.

Finally, *focus on cutting taxes.* It should be obvious that tax reform that isn't also tax relief will go nowhere. Chopping away at federal, state, and local tax rates is a useful enterprise regardless of whether the tax system itself is significantly changed. The new governor of Virginia, Jim Gilmore, was elected with a mandate to end the state's property tax on automobiles.

His experience is a lesson for conservatives on how to package even a modest tax cut to great political effect. I'd like to see a populist assault on excise taxes, for example, as well as continued action to ratchet down tax rates on income, sales, and property and to install super-majority rules that will make future tax hikes difficult to pull off.

Today's tax reformers have their hearts in the right place. But they need to start using their heads. A tax system can look good on paper and still be impossible or inadvisable to adopt in practice. In the world we actually inhabit, mortgage deductions, charitable deductions, fringe benefits, a circumscribed tax base that excludes some forms of economic activity, and tax-code complexity are givens. They exist for a reason. And their defenders are unlikely to listen to true reason. Our task is to work around them—and figure out ways to solve the most pressing problems of our biased and excessive tax system.

***John Hood is president of the John Locke Foundation in Raleigh, N.C., and is the author of* The Heroic Enterprise: Business and the Common Good.**

THE SCHOOL BIZ

by Pia Nordlinger

THIS FALL, 23 NEW EDISON SCHOOLS—public schools managed by Christopher Whittle's Edison Project—are opening around the country. This will nearly double the number of Edison schools in operation, and it will significantly increase the total number of public schools being run by for-profit companies. Bit by bit, evidence is accumulating that will permit a rational verdict on this approach to school reform.

Already, public-private partnerships stand out as one of the few reform strategies that elicit anything less than implacable hostility from the public-school establishment. President Clinton vetoed tax-free education savings accounts. Teacher unions vehemently

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oppose vouchers and have criticized philanthropic scholarships that send needy children to private schools. But a number of school boards and local unions have been willing to give private "education-management organizations" a try.

In doing so, they have had to confront detractors who insist that a school can either educate children or turn a profit but it can't do both. Supporters respond that subjecting education to the discipline of the marketplace creates accountability: Schools must deliver student achievement or lose their customers. Which view will be vindicated in practice it is too soon to say, but clearly the Edison experiment is one to watch.

Of the eight education-management organizations currently operating schools from Massachusetts to California, Edison is the largest. It was launched in 1991 with a four-year, $40 million research-and-development effort leading to the opening of the first schools in 1995. By the spring of 1998, there were 59 public schools managed by national education organizations, 25 of them run by Edison.

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Originally, the project was launched by media entrepreneur Whittle to set up the first national system of private elementary schools. But the Edison team soon turned their attention to managing public schools. In the early 1990s, many states were adopting charter-school laws, and these, notes Benno Schmidt, Edison CEO and former president of Yale University, were spurring public-school systems "to innovate in various ways, including public-private partnerships, since public schools would have to compete with charter schools." About one-third of Edison schools are new charter schools; the rest are "contract schools" that school boards have turned over to Edison.

Edison provides all of its schools with a comprehensive package—disparaged by critics as "school in a box"—that includes a distinctive clustering of grades, starting with prekindergarten, in six "academies" (readiness, primary, elementary, junior, senior, and collegiate); a career ladder for teachers; and an integrated curriculum. Edison schools have a longer school day and year than most public schools, as well as optional before and after-school programs. Every student is given a computer to use both at school and at home. Parents, teachers, and students communicate regularly, on the telephones in every classroom and on a computer network called "The Common." There is no tracking, though students progress at their own pace through the same academic core of humanities, mathematics, and science. All also study Spanish, as well as music, art, dance, and drama, character and ethics, the practical application of knowledge, and physical fitness. Reading is taught through the phonics-based "Success For All" program developed at Johns Hopkins University.

Reactions to Edison have varied. Although the largest teacher union, the National Education Association, formally opposes for-profit management of schools, NEA senior policy analyst Heidi Steffens concedes that the Edison Project seems to be built on a real commitment to education and public accountability. "Edison spent a long time and a lot of money developing their educational program," she says. "It's not the only model, but it's a very good one." She adds that "the leadership of the Edison Project has indicated a desire to work with, not against, the NEA and its affiliates. We believe that is a recognition of the key role of teachers."

Still, the teacher unions are not ready to give the Edison project their endorsement. Last spring, the American Federation of Teachers released a report entitled "Student Achievement in Edison Schools: Mixed Results in an Ongoing Enterprise." Its findings are, indeed, mixed. An analysis of test scores at 12 Edison schools shows that some fell behind comparable public schools, while others came out dramatically ahead. The report applauds the "Success For All" program and extended school time, but criticizes poor implementation of "Success For All," large classes, and teachers' lack of experience.

More troubling, the AFT report questions Edison's honesty. It cites "discrepancies between the record of Edison schools as measured by standard methods of educational evaluation, and the company's sales presentations and promotional materials," and maintains that "Edison has exaggerated test score gains and emphasized favorable comparisons in order to show Edison schools in the most positive light." The report

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recommends a list of precautions that school boards should take before contracting with Edison.

The AFT report has an obvious bias in favor of public schools. "Edison's popularity," the authors write, "depends on the perception that public schools are dysfunctional and helpless to change and that anyone with a fix to offer must be able to do better. . . . There are unheralded programs [going on in public schools] that are already living up to their claims, and people who are looking for ideas—good news about education—should be giving them the same kind of attention that Edison gets."

The Edison Project issued a written response, asserting that the AFT report is flat wrong on many points and that it dismisses data inconsistent with its "glass half empty" conclusions. "Achievement is generally and clearly on the rise," Edison asserts. "Not in every single instance, sometimes impressively and other times only moderately—but overall a promising positive trend that no amount of manipulation can turn around."

As for the AFT's claim that Edison schools rely on novice teachers and large classes—the implication being that these are economy measures detrimental to learning—Edison responds that "class sizes vary too much for such statistics to be meaningful" and that the AFT has relied on anecdotes. The company further argues that its hiring practices have nothing to do with cost cutting, explaining: "In their start-up years Edison schools do tend to attract greater numbers of teachers with less experience: the program demands lots of change, something that teachers with less experience are generally willing to do."

Adds Benno Schmidt, "What is important is that the school is accountable for student performance and teacher satisfaction, not that the school be accountable for preferring senior teachers to junior teachers. Unions, understandably, have somewhat different concerns."

Union hand-wringing does not stop there. According to Heidi Steffens, the NEA fears that for-profit education-management organizations in general will become too proprietary. "Will they let people into their *public* schools to make judgments?" she asks. Will their test scores and financial data be open for inspection? If contract schools need more money than the standard public expenditure, Steffens asks, "are they willing to say that loud and clear? If [money is] one of the factors that make for a successful school, then let's be up front and talk to the education community and the public about that."

So far, Edison cannot be accused of secretiveness. Its staffers call their schools "public" and emphasize their responsibility to the taxpayers. They suspect the criticism springs from another source. "There is a fear of competition and a fear of moving away from uniformity," says Schmidt. "Unions and some bureaucrats believe that uniformity is in their interest because that is the way they can keep control."

On the matter of funding, some states spend so little on education that Edison—which receives the same per-pupil public support as public schools—cannot afford to operate there. In such cases, gifts sometimes make up the difference. "If you have a low-spending district in a very high-cost area, à la most of California, then we can't run an Edison school there," says Whittle. "So in all of our California schools, we have managed to find philanthropic entities to support those schools, and we announce all that." Edison has another financial advantage in that its expenditures on curriculum development and school design far exceed public-school outlays for research and development.

While union headquarters hash out theoretical positions on public-private partnerships, local union affiliates are going their own way. When Edison took over Reeves Elementary School in Dade County, Fla., the United Teachers of Dade scrapped its union contract and negotiated a new one with Edison. "We have a very good relationship with the Edison people," says Pat Tornillo, president of the Unified Teachers of Dade. "We have worked with them in solving whatever problems come up. They created an oversight committee and a new salary schedule for us."

On the other hand, when the Dayton, Ohio, school board planned to turn over five troubled schools to Edison, the local teacher union blocked the move. Union members voted against changes in their contract that would have enabled them to work with Edison: an extended school year and school day and a pay raise that the union leader called insignificant. Joyce Fulwiler Shawhan, president of the Dayton Education Association, told the *Dayton Daily News*, "We're a public school system, and we shouldn't be managed by for-profit companies."

Edison's leaders want to build many more schools—enough that students and teachers who relocate can enter an Edison school in their new community. But they also want to go where they are welcome, and not all school boards and local unions are willing to relinquish control of their students and funds. Before it can expand rapidly, Edison will have to have convincing results in hand—and both the AFT report and Edison's response conclude that it is simply too early to reach any definitive judgment about the effect of the Edison program on students. In the meantime, students and parents are voting with their feet: The average waiting list for Edison schools is 175.

Pia Nordlinger is a reporter for THE WEEKLY STANDARD.

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THE HEAVYWEIGHT

George W. Bush, Presidential Contender

By Fred Barnes

Austin, Texas

George W. Bush, the Republican governor of Texas, loves nicknames. Chief of staff Joe Albaugh, a large man with a flattop, is "Big Country." His press secretary, Karen Hughes, is "The High Prophet," a play on her maiden name, Parfitt, and her prominent role in a Presbyterian church in Austin. Younger brother Jeb is "Jebbie." And the governor's senior political adviser, Karl Rove, is "Turd Blossom." You don't want to know the reason for that one. So it wasn't out of character one recent morning for Bush to shout, "MARTINI!," across the private air terminal in Austin when he spotted Jack Martin. Bush chatted amiably with Martin for several minutes.

There was more to the encounter with Martin than bonhomie. Martin is a well-known Democrat and influential lobbyist. For years, he was Democratic senator Lloyd Bentsen's top political hand in the state, the fellow every Democratic presidential candidate had to consult before going after Texas votes. Now, Martin is a warm friend and ally of Bush. "I just love the guy," Martin says. Bush got in touch with Martin shortly after arriving in Austin in 1995 as the freshly elected governor, and the two hit it off. Since then, Bush has repeatedly called on Martin for advice and help. And their relationship, plus hundreds like it that Bush has fostered, are at the heart of his success in Texas. He plays politics at a high level of proficiency, more like ex-secretary of state James Baker than his own father, the former president. The result: He's neutralized the liberal Austin establishment and the media, won over many Democrats, and made deep inroads into a large and once solidly Democratic constituency in Texas—Hispanics.

And success has spawned a new reputation. He's no longer the punk son of the president, used by his dad for the dirty job of informing John Sununu he was fired as White House chief of staff in 1991. Now he's a virtuoso politician, the legitimate front-runner for the GOP presidential nomination in 2000, and the Republican most likely to defeat Vice President Al Gore. (Bush has a slight edge over Gore in recent polls.) That's his reputation at least. Yet Bush has boycotted national TV talk shows, and he has neither created an organization nor campaigned (except for a dozen speeches, mostly on behalf of fellow GOP governors). True, Bush has special advantages. The Bush name helps, especially with Texans. And he's riding the crest of a GOP wave in Texas that appears to be still growing. He benefits as well from prosperity that makes it easier for incumbents to govern and, in his case, maintain extraordinary popularity (70 percent approval). Amassing a $21 million war chest for his reelection campaign was a snap. "I've raised all my money," Bush boasted to me. In fact, Bush and his parents found time to conduct a day of Texas fund-raisers for Jeb, who's running for governor in Florida. They collected a quick $1 million.

BUSH HAS PROVED THREE THINGS: HE CAN WIN, HE CAN GOVERN AS A MODERATE CONSERVATIVE, AND HE CAN BROADEN THE GOP BASE.

Since he entered the race against Democratic governor Ann Richards in 1993, Bush has proved three things about himself: He can win, he can govern as a moderate conservative, and he can broaden the Republican base. He's managed this without proposing a dazzling array of programs or, as conservatives would prefer, a dazzling array of program cuts. The centerpiece of his governorship in 1997 and 1998 was a complicated tax package that not only failed ignominiously in the legislature but was fervently opposed by then-state Republican chairman Tom Pauken and the small-business community. (Luckily for Bush, he got a $1 billion cut in property taxes as consolation.) The key to his success is a blunt but appealing personality, a will to be liked, and breathtaking skill at

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playing both sides of the political game, running for office and governing.

Bush is a disciplined campaigner. Because he'd run only once before, narrowly losing a 1978 race for a House seat from west Texas, the Richards camp anticipated gaffes. None came. His closest call occurred when he shot a deer out of season. "It's a good thing it wasn't deer season or I might have shot a cow," Bush joked, and the matter died. Reporters doggedly tried to get him off his four designated campaign themes (education, welfare, crime, and litigation reform). They failed. Bush teased the press by announcing a fifth theme—pay attention to the other four. He refused to attack Richards personally, and when she zinged his record as a businessman in a TV commercial, he deftly used that against her in a counter-ad. Richards, ever popular and favored to win, outspent him ($17 million to $14 million) and gave cleverer speeches. He won 54 percent to 46 percent.

What followed was even more impressive. He pushed his program through the still-Democratic legislature, notably tort reform and expansion of local control of schools. And he began wooing Democrats. He made the most of his weekly meetings with lieutenant governor Bob Bullock, the most powerful Democrat in Texas. On his second day in office, Bush irritated Bullock by blabbing to reporters about an issue they were supposed to discuss privately. Bush apologized. "Lesson learned," he told Bullock. Bush made sure nothing leaked to the press from their private sessions. Bullock was snowed. "Bush has him eating out of his hands," says a Democrat. Last November, after announcing he wouldn't run again, Bullock endorsed Bush for reelection—and for any higher office Bush might seek. He did so despite being godfather to Garry Mauro's child. Mauro is Bush's Democratic opponent for governor. Other Democrats took Bullock's cue. El Paso mayor Carlos Ramirez backed Bush, as did ex-Houston mayor Bob Lanier and 105 Democratic officeholders.

Bush also grabbed a media consultant, Mark McKinnon, from Democratic ranks. McKinnon produced the TV spots for Ann Richards in 1990 when she defeated Republican Clayton Williams. Later, he soured on electoral politics and joined Jack Martin's lobbying firm, Public Strategies. There, he got to know two former aides to President Bush, Fred McClure and David Bates, and was introduced to George W., the governor. "I was disarmed completely," he says. "As I and many other Texans will testify, he has a message and approach and generational appeal that is causing a lot of Democrats to add the adjective 'former'" to their party affiliation.

And not just in cities. When I spent a day with Bush in late August as he traveled to small towns near the Gulf coast, I was struck by how many Democratic officials embraced him enthusiastically. In Beeville, Mayor Kenneth Chesshir said, "I'm for him 100 percent." In Sinton, home of the "World Championship Rattlesnake Races," Sheriff Leroy Moody said, "I'm a Democrat, but I don't have any problem saying I'm for him." Democrats clamored to have their picture taken with Bush.

Bush's greatest achievement, potentially, is turning Hispanics into Republicans. Heaven knows, he's trying. He speaks workable Spanish, attends Hispanic events, and is often photographed with Hispanic kids. All that helps, but only a little. What has worked is Bush's willingness to veer sharply from the Republican line. He's pro-Mexico and pro-immigrant, insisting a prosperous Mexico is critical to American stability. He's against stationing troops on the border to impede drug smugglers. "Policies that tend to wall Mexico off, I oppose," he says. "Mexico is not our enemy." He's against punishing children of illegal aliens, as Proposition 187 requires in California. "I feel we ought to educate immigrant children," he says. English-only appeals infuriate him. "It says to Hispanic people, 'Me, not you. Your heritage doesn't matter.'" And he's willing to tolerate bilingual education, so long as English is taught. In 1994, he got 24 percent of the Hispanic vote. His goal in 1998 is 40 percent. That would represent a major political breakthrough.

FOR ALL HIS PROWESS, THERE ARE QUESTIONS ABOUT HIS ABILITY TO RUN A NATIONAL CAMPAIGN. NOT THAT HE'S ANNOUNCED ONE.

For all Bush's political prowess, there are three big questions about his ability to run a successful national campaign. Not that he's announced one. For now, he's stumping all-out for reelection and, as of Labor Day, won't appear outside Texas. His mantra this fall is that there are only two ways to run, 100 percent or unopposed. If the chance he'll run for president later is bothersome, he says, Texans should factor that in when they vote for governor on November 3. Oh, yes, the three questions: Is George W. different from his father? Does he have a message? Will his political style, a hit in Austin, transfer to the national stage?

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Temperamentally, he's not his father's son. If the ex-president is every woman's first husband, Paul Burka of *Texas Monthly* wrote, "then George W. is the wild boyfriend every woman dated in her youth." He's looser, louder, more casual than his father. Bush once high-fived a reporter who showed up to interview him. He went to Andover, Yale, and Harvard Business School, but says his upbringing did more to shape him. "I was raised in Midland, Texas. [My father] was raised in Greenwich, Connecticut. I'm a westerner." His view of his role in government is different, too. Bush Sr. regarded public service as a civic duty. George W. views it as a way to accomplish things.

He plays populist to his father's patrician. After his standard speech, about 15 minutes long, George W. loves to wade into crowds, chat, trade quips, have his picture taken, sign autographs—as Clinton does, actually. He's a toucher, a patter, a slapper, a hugger. By the end of his first stop at a Gulf coast town on August 27, sweat had seeped through the back of his suit coat. Bush appeared not to mind. In Aransas, he worked his way through a crowd of roughly 400 in a way that almost seemed organized (but wasn't). Somehow, he got several groups of a dozen or more young people to cluster together. Then he slipped in the middle and a picture was taken. "Why aren't you doing your homework?," he cracked to one teenage boy. "This *is* my homework," the young man said.

George W. Bush

Kevin Chadwick

What really matters, though, is whether Bush is more conservative than his father. Bush and his aides insist he is. "People will find I'm probably more conservative than he is," Bush says. "Labels are labels and results are results." But when I asked Bush to be more specific, he declined. Though he says Ronald Reagan is his political role model, George W., like his dad, is not an ideological person. He's conservative by instinct. On taxes and limiting government, he sounds semi-Reaganesque. The Cato Institute, in its rating of governors, called him "admirably tightfisted" for holding annual increases in state spending to 2 percent. Last week, he kicked off his reelection campaign by proposing to reduce taxes by $2.5 billion. And should he run for president, aides claim Richard Darman, loathed by conservatives, won't be on the Bush team. George W. thinks Darman, as budget chief, had a ruinous impact on the Bush presidency. At one point, he asked his father to fire Darman and treasury secretary Nick Brady, according to aides. I asked the governor to confirm this. He wouldn't, but he didn't deny it either. Another sign of Bush's conservatism is his refusal last year to help William Weld win confirmation as ambassador to Mexico. Weld pleaded with Bush to intervene with Sen. Jesse Helms, who was blocking the nomination. Bush never considered it. He couldn't figure out why Weld would give up a good job as governor of Massachusetts to serve in the Clinton administration.

Question two: the message. I think Bush has one. It's just not an exciting message. His stump speech stresses limited government, the state's role in education, and the need for a broad cultural shift in America back to traditional values. The Texas legislature meets only 140 days every two years, he notes. "Our motto is, If government doesn't meet, it can't hurt you," he adds. But there's "a legitimate role" for state governments in education. "Education is to the state what national defense is to the national government." He wants the legislature to ban "social promotions" next year: If kids fail a state-run test certifying the ability to read by the third grade, they won't be moved up to the fourth grade just to keep them with their age group. One adviser suggested teachers be allowed to waive the requirement for students who

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failed but warranted promotion anyway. Bush said no.

The provocative part of Bush's spiel is his cultural conservatism. He's not a conventional social conservative. He doesn't mention abortion, homosexuality, or school prayer. But all of his speeches feature a conservative rap on the culture. "I've seen the culture change once in my lifetime," says Bush, who is 52. And the "ravages" of that shift toward permissiveness and hedonism are everywhere. Government can't prompt a new swing back to old values, but leaders can help. So Bush talks up "right choices" for teenagers: stay in school, no drugs or alcohol, no sex before marriage. There's "honor, not shame," in sexual abstinence, he says. Young men who father children and walk away don't meet "the definition of manliness."

Bush was taken with David Horowitz's brutal critique of the '60s, *Destructive Generation*, and invited Horowitz to Austin for a talk last November. Then, in May, Bush went to Hollywood and addressed 300 entertainment industry leaders before Horowitz's Wednesday Morning Club. As Bush spoke, "I said this is too conservative for a Hollywood crowd," Horowitz recalls. "He went on about abstinence." Yet there was no palpable backlash in the audience. Columnist Richard Reeves wrote a favorable review of the speech. Says Horowitz: "This shows how good [Bush] is at presenting difficult themes. I've never seen a working Republican politician as good as this. He's comfortable in his own skin. He's comfortable with the issues."

Cultural conservatism alone won't carry Bush through a national campaign. (He's expected to announce for president next spring.) Without sharper issues, he may come off as Howard Baker reincarnated. Baker was Senate GOP leader when he sought the Republican presidential nomination in 1980. Mildly conservative, he relied on his prior political success, his prestige in Washington, and his many power relationships inside the Beltway. But influence in Washington and the notion that Baker could defeat any Democrat didn't fly with Republican primary voters. He flopped.

Likewise, Bush's political success is based heavily on his productive ties in Austin. In calm times, his reputation as a winner in Texas might be enough. But should the economy tank and instability around the world increase, voters might respond to a bolder candidate, as they did to Reagan in 1980.

For now, Bush shies away from specific national issues. He doesn't want Texas voters to conclude he's using reelection as governor as a stepping stone. I asked Bush if he sees himself as a "national greatness" conservative who favors bold government projects, as proclaimed by Peter Beinart in the *New Republic*. He didn't seem to know what I was talking about. I asked about his policy toward China. All he'd say is the Clinton administration has wrongly "jettisoned Taiwan." I asked if he thinks *Roe* v. *Wade* should be overturned. He dodged the question, saying he's a committed pro-lifer but that the country won't be ready to ban abortions until the culture changes.

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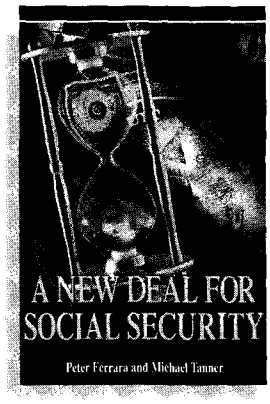

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And so on. Still, there are national issues he's prepared to tout when the time comes: Sweeping Social Security reform. More money for the military, particularly for missile defense. An overall lowering of the tax burden.

But the time isn't yet. Besides, "not showing much leg is useful to us," a Bush adviser says. He's become the GOP front-runner while not running. His only appearance at a presidential cattle show, in Indianapolis a year ago, was panned by the press. He doesn't relish spending time with the other candidates. He was miffed when Steve Forbes endorsed Tom Pauken, his least favorite Texas Republican, for state attorney general—and didn't check first with the man at the head of the ticket, him. (Pauken lost.) He likes Dan Quayle, but regards him as tarnished, and he believes Lamar Alexander's time has passed. He thinks Gary Bauer is a twerp, but respects John Ashcroft. Staying above the fray makes Bush look larger than any of these guys. Maybe that's because he is. ♦

JUSTICE DENIED

How To Avoid a Mass-Murder Trial for 13 Years, At Taxpayer Expense

By Debra J. Saunders

In June 1985, two former Marines turned would-be survivalists—Leonard Lake and Charles Ng—were caught shoplifting a $75 vise from a hardware store in South San Francisco. Ng managed to flee. His friend Lake, while in custody, wrote a note to his ex-wife, then killed himself, swallowing a cyanide pill he kept in case of emergency. When police discovered that the two had been driving a stolen car belonging to a missing San Francisco man, they obtained a warrant to search Lake's home in Wilseyville, Calif., in Calaveras County (of Mark Twain jumping-frog fame). There they found charred bones, shallow graves, a sexual torture chamber, Lake's diary, and videotapes of women who were forced to serve as sexual slaves during the short remainder of their lives.

Authorities believe Ng and Lake killed as many as 19 men, women, and children—the men, in order to steal their cars, video equipment, and other belongings; the women for sexual torture; and two babies because they were unfortunate enough to be in harm's way. Two entire families—Harvey Dubs, his wife Deborah, and their baby, Sean, as well as Brenda O'Connor, Lonnie Bond Sr., and their baby, Lonnie Bond Jr.—were killed. Ng was eventually charged with the murder of 12 victims, a capital offense. That was in the summer of 1985: Ronald Reagan was president, Bruce Springsteen's "Born in the U.S.A." topped the charts, and Charlie Ng was a 24-year-old fugitive from justice.

Today, 13 years and two presidents later, 37-year-old Charlie Ng has still managed to avoid going to trial, even though he was in custody within a month. Witnesses have died, evidence has moldered, defense lawyers and judges have come and gone, while Ng has pulled out every stop in the justice system to delay his day in court—an odd strategy, it might seem, for a man who claims to be innocent. With any luck, his trial will begin later this month in an Orange County courtroom. But already, California's prosecution of Ng is the most expensive in the state's history, with costs approaching $10 million. The case has become a monument to a criminal-defense system run amok.

"We hope we live long enough to see the trial," Lola Stapley said last year. Stapley, 70, believes Lake and Ng tortured and shot her youngest son, Scott, on April 22, 1985. But even if Ng is "found guilty and is given the death penalty," she said, "we fully don't expect to live that long"—since the death-penalty appeals could easily last another decade.

How has Ng done it? Cunning, luck, and exploitation of every legal loophole he could find.

Ng's first smart move was to flee to Canada. That's where police picked him up a month after Lake's suicide. Ng was arrested when he shot a security guard who spotted him shoplifting food in Calgary. He was tried and sentenced to four and a half years in a Cana-

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AP Photo/Reed Saxon

Charlie Ng at a June 17, 1998, hearing

dian prison. California sought extradition, but Canada, which abolished the death penalty in 1976, was reluctant to deport Ng to a country that executes mass murderers. Nonetheless, in 1991, rather than turn Canada into a haven for fugitive murderers, the Canadian Supreme Court ruled that Ng could be extradited to the United States without soiling Canada's commitment to human rights. Still, Charlie had won six years.

The day of the court's ruling, Canada shipped Ng back to California. The *San Francisco Chronicle* reported, "Once Ng is arraigned, prosecutors say they hope he will face trial soon." Wrong.

Prosecutors in Calaveras County did put Ng through a preliminary hearing to determine whether he should be held for trial. Because the Hong Kong native was caught with escape paraphernalia and was considered extremely dangerous, he appeared at the hearing handcuffed, shackled, and placed in a steel security cage. In photos, his lean body seemed to be itching to leap out of his prison jumpsuit.

During his years in captivity, Ng mastered the art of tying up the courts. By 1994, when the trial venue was changed to Orange County, he had gone through five judges, some of whom tossed the case from their benches like a hot potato. The state supreme court had ruled on his representation eight times. Ng had even found time to slap two of his taxpayer-funded lawyers with a $1 million civil malpractice suit, claiming that he would not have been charged with murder if they had done a better job.

Ng's best friend was the "Marsden motion," used by a defendant to request a new defense lawyer. Ng has used this device repeatedly to postpone his day of justice, going through at least 10 taxpayer-funded attorneys. This abuse of process naturally angers judges. But so what? Ng has turned this to his advantage, managing to rid himself of judges, too.

In 1995, superior court judge Robert R. Fitzgerald made it plain that he was going to try the Ng case. Instead, Fitzgerald became the third judge to be ousted from the case. It started with—what else?—a Marsden motion Ng filed to dismiss his public defender, William G. Kelley, so as to serve as his own defense counsel. Ng told Fitzgerald, "I don't—I can't say for sure, but I lost the trust and confidence that I think I need to, uh, to have him as my counsel."

Perhaps because Fitzgerald didn't want to give Ng grounds for appealing a conviction, the judge gave Ng what he had petitioned for. Presto, change-o. Ng decided that he didn't want to boot Kelley after all. Fitzgerald told Charlie, tough potatoes: He couldn't have Kelley back.

Three other lawyers then petitioned for Ng to get Kelley back and have Fitzgerald removed from the case. Taxpayer-funded psychiatrist Dr. Gary Dylewski testified that Ng now "realized he had misplaced his frustration upon those persons who were making their best efforts to prepare his defense." In other words, Charlie Ng wasn't trying to delay his trial; his little feelings were hurt. Amazingly, the state court of appeals ruled in Ng's favor, not only restoring Kelley, but also ousting Fitzgerald, in part because of what the higher court deemed Fitzgerald's unusual interest in trying the case.

Charlie's little tricks bought him another two years. Fitzgerald originally set the trial for September 6, 1996. The trial was put off first when Ng became his own attorney, and again when he had to wait for a new judge. Ng finally may have met his match, though, in Judge John J. Ryan, who has succeeded Fitzgerald and scheduled the trial for September 1, 1998.

Having won Kelley back, but finally facing a real trial date, Ng decided once more that he wanted to defend himself. Another day, another Marsden motion. Ryan agreed to let Ng represent himself but insisted that Kelley and another attorney serve as stand-by and advisory counsel. That way, if Ng changed his mind again or proved incompetent to represent himself, the trial could proceed as scheduled. But then Ng outdid himself. He asked for a pre-trial

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hearing delay because, he said, his new glasses gave him headaches when he read. (The prosecution procured affidavits from deputy sheriffs who attested that Charlie seemed to read just fine.) He also asked the court, for the umpteenth time, to change the venue to San Francisco. He whined, "It's not my fault," when he showed up at a hearing unprepared, blaming his paralegals. Then, after delaying for 13 years, Ng claimed he needed another six months to complete DNA tests on the victims' bones.

The clock may finally have run out on Charlie Ng. Ryan did postpone the trial, but only until September 14, and this time at the request of the jury commissioner, so that more than 1,000 prospective jurors could be reviewed for the trial, which is expected to last up to nine months.

Time has transformed the once buff and wiry Ng. He has hit middle age. The electric-shock belt he wears under his clothes adds to his girth. He sits slumped as he represents himself. When asked questions, he answers in halting English. Lola Stapley believes he's playing stupid. There is a comeuppance here. The criminal who did such a splendid job challenging his lawyers' competence sits slack-jawed and ineffectual in court. In August, after Ryan asked Ng if he wanted to represent himself, the former survivalist couldn't even muster an answer. Ryan ruled: Kelley is defending Ng. Again. And again, on August 28, Ng asked Judge Ryan to be allowed to represent himself. No dice.

At last reckoning, Calaveras County administrator Brent Harrington figured the cost of prosecuting and defending Ng has mounted to $9.3 million. It will undoubtedly go much higher. The trial will not be a simple one. After the 1985 investigation, police accidentally destroyed evidence in a related case. The mother of victim Kathleen Allen has died, as has the father of victim Debbie Dubs; both would have been witnesses. Investigative sheriff Claude Ballard and another potential witness have also died.

A friend of the Dubses e-mailed me in 1997 after one of Ng's many delays. Harvey Dubs was an abrasive guy, she wrote, but so big-hearted that he once drove 70 miles to the University of California at Davis to have his cat's leg amputated so that it could live. Debbie was "a dear, gentle person" whose life revolved around her son, Sean. Sean was 18 months old when the family disappeared. "It is as though they never existed," the friend wrote. "They simply vanished. They never had funerals. We never said good-bye to them."

And they call this a fair trial? ♦

THE LAWRENCE WALSH SHOW

One Independent Counsel Bashes Another

By Jay Nordlinger

As President Clinton's date with the grand jury approached, Lawrence Walsh was feeling queasy. "My instinct is to shut my eyes," he told a television audience. The Iran-contra prosecutor was hardly known for delicacy when he was pursuing Presidents Reagan and Bush. What had so perturbed him now? "I just think it's very harsh on the country that the president is being subjected to this experience and being distracted from his duties," Walsh explained. All of this trouble, merely "to get into some prolonged interrogation as to a personal indiscretion."

Of Kenneth Starr's multitude of critics, Walsh is among the most severe. From the second that Monica Lewinsky appeared on the scene, Walsh has been at Starr's heels, questioning his judgment, deriding his methods, and accusing him of an unwarranted interest in sex. Does he feel a sense of solidarity with Starr, being one of the few who have occupied that position? "Not really," he answers. Has he ever felt a pang of empathy as he has seen Starr under attack? "Not one bit." Walsh insists to anyone who will listen that Starr has done a gross disservice to Clinton, the presidency, and the office of independent counsel.

On January 21—Day One of Monica Madness—Walsh complained on CNN that Starr was being drawn into matters with "no relationship to [Clin-

Jay Nordlinger is associate editor of THE WEEKLY STANDARD.

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ton's] performance as president." Ordinarily, "prosecutors like to stay away from this type of allegation." After all, "activities of this sort have gone on for years and years, and generations and generations," and "people typically lie" about them. Walsh's advice to the president? "Trust the country to be wise enough to disregard [the Lewinsky matter] in the end."

On Day Two, Walsh was on MSNBC, wondering how "after 30-odd million dollars spent investigating Whitewater" Starr wound up "policing the Paula Jones private litigation," which was "beyond his jurisdiction" (though not according to Clinton's own attorney general, Janet Reno). On Day Three, Walsh did double duty, lighting into Starr on *Good Morning America* and National Public Radio. Starr, he said, "should not be permitted to intrude into an ongoing civil lawsuit, disrupting it and practically sitting at the plaintiff's table." In any event, if all of Washington officialdom "were held to a standard of truthfulness in their private affairs, their private litigation, we'd never be done with it. Congress wouldn't be able to do anything but conduct impeachment proceedings."

Over the next several months, Walsh seldom missed a chance to jab at Starr. The testimony of Secret Service agents? Starr was only "exploiting a publicity opportunity to damage the president politically." Obstruction of justice, perjury, witness tampering? These were mere "pretenses," designed to "embarrass the president for a personal escapade." Allegations that Starr was leaking to the press? "Very disturbing," in need of "clearing up." Walsh was by turns vitriolic and condescending. Prosecution "is a matter of judgment," he averred, and "Judge Starr still has a lot to learn." The Lewinsky probe, he declared, "is harassment of the president," pure and simple.

Walsh's detractors, of course, are aghast that the former independent counsel has appointed himself the quasi-official scold of the current independent counsel. It is Walsh, they say, who abused his office during a six-year investigation that hounded its targets unremittingly. The brief against Walsh? He re-indicted Caspar Weinberger five days before the 1992 election, implicating Bush. He treated relatively minor offenses as though they were capital crimes. He surrounded himself with deputies who were fiercely partisan Democrats. He leaked profligately to the media. And (unlike Starr) he subjected administration officials to withering public rhetoric. Walsh, say his still-riled opponents, is in no position to raise his voice against Starr.

Lawrence Walsh

C. Boyden Gray, Bush's White House counsel, speaks for many when he swears that "no prosecutor could ever equal Walsh for his lack of restraint. He habitually violated every known precept of the Department of Justice. His re-indictment of Weinberger was totally gratuitous and absolutely, unforgivably outrageous." As to the leaking, "Walsh could have the front page of the *Washington Post* whenever he wanted, and none of us ever dreamed of confronting him on it." Neither was Walsh above taking the low road, according to Gray, alarming the president's men with his knowledge of their sexual misdeeds: "He went after some fairly high-powered people in terms of their potential lady friends in faraway places. And it had an intimidating effect."

Walsh offers no apologies. "The difference between my consideration for President Reagan and even Bush," he says, "and [Starr's] consideration for President Clinton is night and day." The Starr inquiry, like his own, "is an expensive operation, and it ought not to get into consensual adultery." Walsh does not regret the timing of his re-indictment of Weinberger, protesting that the calendar imposed by the court "gave me no choice." He freely admits to using the media—Walsh saw to it that he met with reporters individually at least one day a week—but he claims that it was necessary to counter the administration line.

Furthermore, Walsh says, "I received harsher treatment from the Reagan and Bush administrations than

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Starr has received. I was hamstrung by classified-information problems, while Starr is not. Everything was top secret." On reflection, Walsh does make a concession: "I wasn't abused personally, as Carville and others are doing. But when we re-indicted Weinberger, it was bad. Senator Dole took after us. Still, it wasn't daily, as with Starr." As for the issue of illicit liaisons, Walsh explains that "if you investigate 50 people, you're bound to run into some sexual impropriety. And we did. But we never exploited it, as Starr is doing now."

Walsh maintains that he bears no personal animus against Starr—only that he has an honest "judgmental difference" with him. He notes that Starr, like Judge David Sentelle (who sat on the panel that appointed Starr), is a member of the Federalist Society, "an organization of right-wing ideologues." There may be "nothing sinister" about it, he hastens to add, but "the appearance is unfortunate." Walsh himself is always identified in the press as a Republican. He says he usually votes the straight Republican ticket, but has cast a Democratic ballot for president three times: for Lyndon Johnson and for Clinton, twice.

The crux of Walsh's case against Starr is that "he takes the law and pushes it to the extreme." As a prosecutor, says Walsh, "you have to have a sense of the importance of the person you're undermining, weighed against the importance of what you're trying to achieve." Walsh, though, was himself perpetually faulted for just this absence of prosecutorial balance. The late Arthur Liman, the liberal litigator who served as counsel to the Iran-contra committee in Congress, writes in his posthumous memoir that Walsh acted "as if he were prosecuting a massive antitrust case, not a matter of constitutional dimensions. It mattered not a whit to him that it took six years to complete his investigation, or even that the president had long since retired. Moreover, like prosecutors who expand the reach of the criminal law, he tried to make criminal cases out of political offenses."

In his own memoir, published last year, Walsh makes a stirring defense of an aggressive independent counsel: "Some observers have argued that actions that violate the criminal statutes against fraud, obstruction, or perjury should—if undertaken by members of the executive branch—be viewed merely as political rough-housing, or playing hardball. . . . But dishonesty seems a poor substitute for thoughtful analysis and forthright advocacy. Otherwise, we are left to believe that certain people . . . are above the law."

And, near the close of his book, Walsh includes a passage that Kenneth Starr might particularly appreciate. In fact, Walsh would do well to ponder it, too: "Prosecutors must not be deterred by partisan attacks. . . . [They] cannot acknowledge personal concern; their concern must be only for the public duty that is being hampered. Their obligation is to apply law enforcement evenly to high officials as well as low and to go as far as is possible and fair. When these efforts are blocked by partisan politics, independent counsel must publicly expose the derogation of the rule of law." ♦

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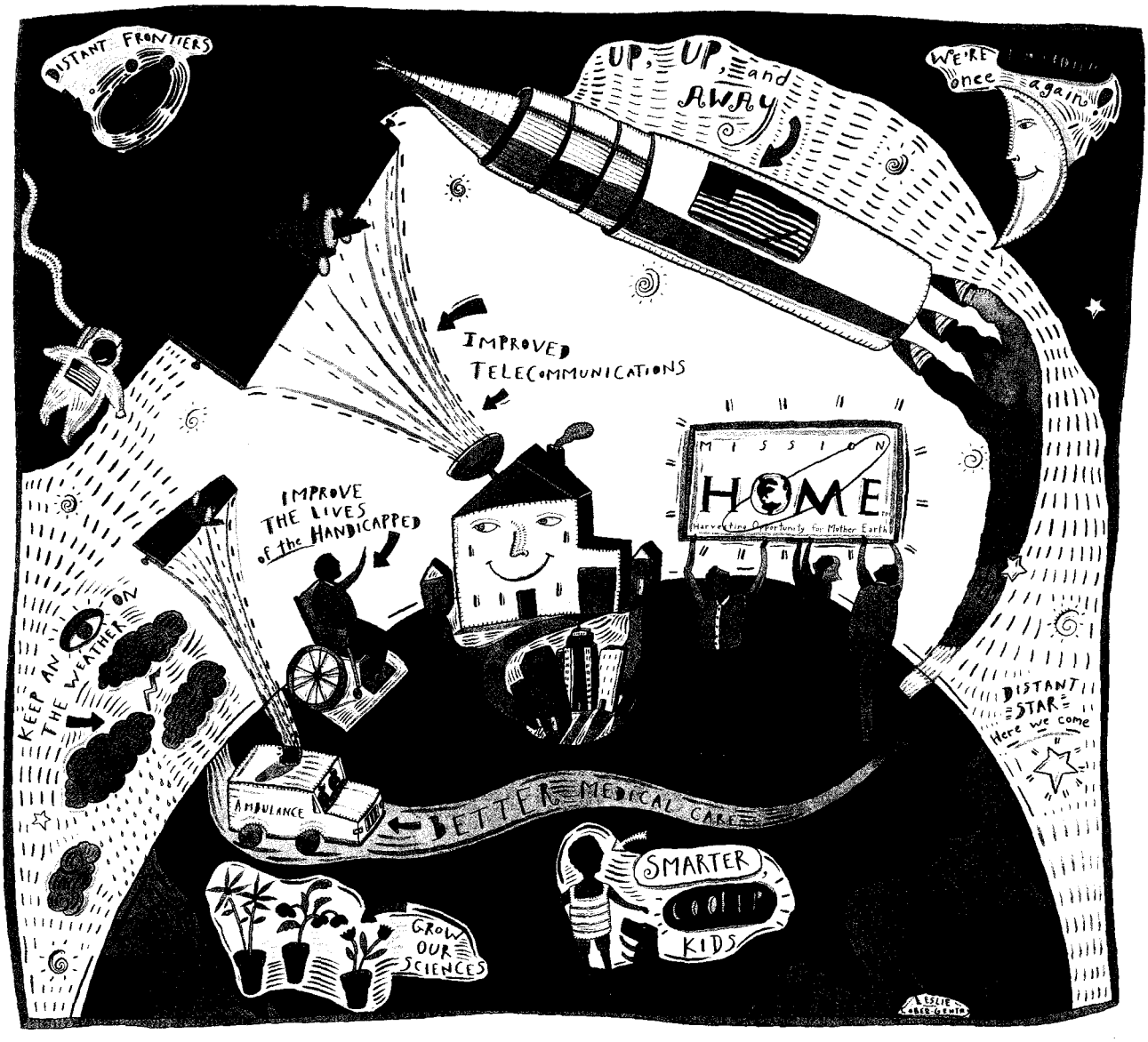

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How Dean Acheson Won the Cold War

Statesmanship, Morality, and Foreign Policy

By Robert Kagan

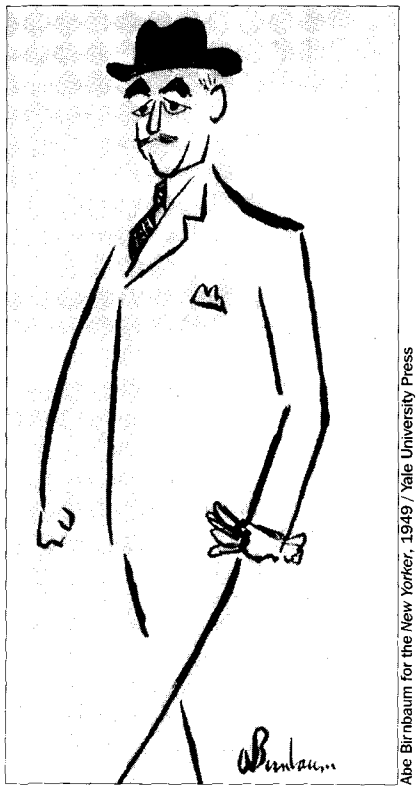
Dean Acheson may be the most respected secretary of state of the last fifty years, but he is also the most widely misunderstood and misrepresented. The Cold War policies he helped put in place—the Truman Doctrine, the Marshall Plan, the NATO alliance, containment, the global ideological and strategic challenge to the Soviet Union—now seem as unassailable as if he had brought them down from the mountain on stone tablets. Yet, as James Chace's new biography *Acheson* shows, the true meaning of the man's legacy and what it implies for American foreign policy today remains a matter of intense debate.

The confusion about Acheson begins with something as mundane as his appearance: his famous "aristocratic" bearing, the prominent mustache, the natty clothing, and the mid-Atlantic accent that so grated on Republican Senators in the 1940s and '50s: "this pompous diplomat in striped pants, with the phony British accent," as Senator Joseph McCarthy once put it.

Even less intemperate senators found Acheson arrogant and supercilious. He talked, said one, "as if a piece of fish had got stuck in his mustache." Richard Nixon recalled in his memoirs that Acheson presented an irresistible target to Republicans looking for a symbol of the effete Eastern establishment.

A contributing editor to The Weekly Standard, *Robert Kagan is senior associate at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.*

Acheson's "clipped mustache, his British tweeds, and his haughty manner made him the perfect foil for the snobbish kind of foreign service personality and mentality that had been taken in hook, line, and sinker by the Communists."



Abe Birnbaum for the *New Yorker*, 1949 / Yale University Press

James Chace
Acheson
The Secretary of State Who Created the American World
Simon & Schuster, 512 pp., $30

For all his sartorial dash and aristocratic tone, however, Acheson's roots were neither wealthy nor patrician. His father, an Irish immigrant, was a low-church Episcopal rector; his mother was from a successful family of millers, well off but not rich. Acheson grew up in comfortable, upper-middle-class circumstances in Middletown, Connecticut.

When he was sent off to boarding school at Groton—that bastion of elitism where the Auchinclosses and the Harrimans rubbed elbows under the school's domineering rector, Endicott Peabody—Acheson rebelled, graduating at the bottom of his class. As a senior, he published in the *Grotonian* "The Snob in America," a thinly veiled assault on the Groton style. "The essence of democracy is belief in the common people," he wrote, "and the essence of snobbery is contempt of them." When Peabody in exasperation told Acheson's mother that he could not make a "Groton boy" out of her son, Mrs. Acheson replied, "Dr. Peabody, I didn't send Dean here to have you make a 'Groton boy' out of him. I sent him here to be educated. . . . I will leave him here as long as you think you can succeed, though you give me considerable doubt." Acheson's confident and condescending manner derived not from blue blood but from an iron-willed and supremely self-assured mother.

Acheson remained something of a rebel all his life, even in government service. He was never cowed by authority, much less by the authority of class. He had a mixed view of Franklin Roosevelt, a man whom he respected for his understanding of power but who treated his aides and

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cabinet officers with patrician condescension. "It was not gratifying," Acheson later said, "to receive the easy greeting which milord might give a promising stable boy and pull one's forelock in return." As a senior Treasury Department official, he clashed with Roosevelt over the president's plan to devalue the dollar in a way that Acheson believed violated the law. The president responded to Acheson's lawyerly complaints with a simple Rooseveltian pronouncement: "I say it is legal." When Acheson brazenly replied that it was he, not Franklin Roosevelt, who would have to put his signature on the order, Roosevelt told him to go, ending Acheson's five months in the New Deal.

The one president Acheson truly admired was not the real aristocrat Roosevelt or the faux-aristocrat John F. Kennedy, but the accidental president, Harry Truman. In elite circles, both Democratic and Republican, Truman was known as a hack haberdasher who had spent his political life as a cog in Missouri's Pendergast machine. But Acheson devoted himself to Truman with an unusual loyalty both during and after his presidency. As Chace notes, "Truman never really had a close male friend, until, toward the end of his life, he found one in Dean Acheson."

The confusion over Acheson's manners has been nothing compared with the controversy over his policies as secretary of state, a controversy that never diminished over the four decades of the Cold War. It is sometimes imagined in today's forgetful world that the late 1940s and early 1950s were a time of consensus about strategic imperatives. Nothing could be farther from the truth, and no one knew better than Dean Acheson how bloody the battles were. As the principal shaper of American foreign policy in those years, he was attacked from every conceivable direction.

Conservative Republicans flailed at Acheson as a dupe of Moscow, the "Communist-appeasing, Communist-protecting betrayer of America," as Senator William Jenner called him, or, as the more alliterative Richard Nixon put it, the "Red Dean of the College of Cowardly Containment."

Simon & Schuster

Acheson with his mother, circa 1905. A senior at Groton, 1910. The Groton crew, Acheson third from left.

But to others, Acheson was the epitome of hardheaded anti-communism. Senator Arthur Vandenberg saw Acheson as a thoroughgoing anti-Communist hawk, "totally anti-Soviet and . . . completely tough." Walter Lippmann, America's most influential columnist and a leading proponent of foreign-policy "realism" in his day, agreed that Acheson was tough. In fact, he was too tough, too driven by anti-Communist ideology, too inclined to confront the Soviets, and too ambitious in his exercise of American power. At a famous Georgetown dinner party in 1948, Lippmann railed against the Truman Doctrine's expansive promises to defend "free peoples" everywhere. Acheson, the Truman Doctrine's intellectual author, loudly accused Lippmann of "sabotaging" American foreign policy. Fingers were jabbed in chests. And when Republican congressmen less than two years later voted unanimously for Acheson's resignation on the grounds that he had betrayed both China and Korea to communism, Lippmann, the dean of the college of cowardly columnists, joined in calling for Acheson's head.

The controversy persisted throughout the Cold War. In the 1950s, Acheson remained tarnished by Republican attacks and still bore the absurd reputation of being soft on communism. He was shunned as a political liability by Adlai Stevenson during that hapless candidate's two failed presidential runs. Even John Kennedy, though he admired Acheson, would not give him a high-ranking post in his new administration.

Nevertheless, the events of the 1950s and early '60s did much to rehabilitate Acheson's reputation. By the time Kennedy took office, Acheson's foreign-policy legacy had become far less controversial. Nixon's earlier criticisms of Ache-

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son's "cowardly containment" lost their punch when the Eisenhower-Nixon administration proved no more—and indeed somewhat less—aggressive against communism than Acheson had been. Among Democrats, meanwhile, Acheson's brand of liberal anti-communism had become the reigning orthodoxy. When Acheson, as the senior figure in a group known as the "Wise Men," urged Lyndon Johnson in 1964 to hold the line against communism in Indochina, even if it meant introducing thousands of American combat troops, he was expressing the near-unanimous view of the liberal foreign-policy establishment. By the end of the 1960s, Acheson stood at that establishment's pinnacle, and when Richard Nixon took office in 1969, the erstwhile baiter of the "Red Dean" assiduously courted Acheson's favor. By 1970 Acheson had become, in the words of Walter Isaacson and Evan Thomas, "the high priest of the old order."

But no sooner had Acheson been rehabilitated than that old order exploded over Vietnam, and Acheson's reputation came tumbling down again. A new breed of liberals, disgusted not only with Nixon but also with the Democrats' role in bringing America into the war, found the original villains in Acheson, Truman, and the post-war establishment. Wasn't it Acheson's grand strategy—from the Truman Doctrine through the Korean War—that ultimately led the United States into Vietnam? In 1972, no less a figure than Senator William Fulbright declared that "the anti-communism of the Truman Doctrine" had indeed been "the guiding spirit of American foreign policy since World War II."

Leftist revisionist historians like Walter LaFeber fleshed out Fulbright's argument. In the 1980 edition of his influential *America, Russia, and the Cold War*, LaFeber angrily charged that it was Acheson and his colleagues who invented the original "domino theory," applied with such disastrous results in Indochina. It was Acheson who had consciously refused to place limits on the Truman Doctrine's application around the world. And it was Acheson who had pressed for American intervention in the Greek civil war in 1947, an unwarranted interference in the internal affairs of another nation, justified in the name of anti-communism, that provided the model for intervention in Vietnam less than two decades later.

This revisionist attack by LaFeber and many young liberals during the 1970s resonated even within Acheson's liberal establishment. Acheson's policies now seemed too bold. As Isaacson and Thomas noted in their biography of the establishment, *The Wise Men*, Vietnam turned liberals into "quasi isolationists; they argued that the United States was badly overextended and had to pull back, that communism was not monolithic, and that its threat had been grossly overestimated." On every one of these points, it was difficult to pretend that the anti-Communist policies and worldview they were now attacking had not been the policies and worldview of Dean Acheson.

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Dean and Alice Acheson in the 1930s

Difficult but not impossible. Isaacson and Thomas, speaking for the new, post-Vietnam liberal establishment, labored to put some distance between Acheson's policies and later American behavior. Perhaps Acheson in his efforts to win congressional approval for early Cold War policies had employed an overheated rhetoric and oversold America's role in defending "free peoples." Perhaps Acheson, like the sorcerer's apprentice, had unwittingly unleashed forces that then overwhelmed him. But the key word is "unwittingly." Acheson and other Truman administration officials "would have been quite taken aback if they had realized in 1945 that for the next forty years—and perhaps for decades to come—the world would lurch from one crisis to another, driven on by a hair-trigger nuclear arms race." Acheson and his colleagues had been "doomed to watch as men less comfortable with subtleties and nuances shattered their vision of a stern yet stable modus vivendi between the U.S. and U.S.S.R."

The unsubtle and unnuanced men Isaacson and Thomas had in mind were, of course, the senior policymakers of the Reagan administration, whose policies constituted "the triumph of ideology over pragmatism, of political posturing over serious statesmanship." Surely the admirable Dean Acheson could not be associated with anything the despised Ronald Reagan did. James Chace, too, was part of the liberal, anti-Reagan orthodoxy. "An anti-Soviet consensus leading to a new crusade of global containment," he wrote in 1981, "will not only strain our resources to such a degree that we will have to live with an enormous military establishment and a continuing reduction in our standard of living, but will also stretch our alliances to the breaking point."

Three years after Isaacson and Thomas published *The Wise Men*, however, the Cold War ended, not in nuclear holocaust but peacefully—

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not with the straining of American resources and alliances, as Chace had predicted, but with the collapse of communism and the Soviet empire.

The new post-Cold War era inevitably inspired yet another round of revisions to the Acheson legacy. In 1992, the historian Melvyn P. Leffler argued in his monumental study of the Truman era, *A Preponderance of Power*, that while the men who shaped policy in the early Cold War had made some "foolish" errors (including overconcern with "peripheral" issues like Indochina), nevertheless they had also made many "wise" and "prudent" decisions of enormous and lasting importance. After 1989 it was hard to gainsay the achievements of Acheson and his colleagues, and Leffler, who had been something of a revisionist himself at one time, candidly acknowledged the central, inescapable, and, for some, difficult historical truth: "The cold war, Truman and his advisers believed, could be won. And so it has been."

Chace's *Acheson* is the first serious look at the man and his policies since the end of the Cold War, and like all previous interpretations of Acheson, it bears the mark of the era in which it was written, as well as the prejudices of the author. Chace is positively celebratory in crediting Acheson with the Cold War victory and the peace and prosperity that ensued in the new world of the 1990s. That world, Chace insists, was very much Acheson's creation.

"It was Acheson who created the intellectual concepts" that guided American foreign policy in what Chace unashamedly calls the "heroic period" of the early Cold War. It was Acheson "who had the clearest view of the role America might play in the postwar world, and who possessed the willpower to accomplish these ends." It was Acheson "who was a prime architect of the Marshall Plan to restore economic health to Western Europe, who refashioned a peacetime alliance of nations under the rubric of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, who crafted the Truman Doctrine to contain any Soviet advance into the Middle East and the Mediterranean." It was Acheson who played a major part in creating "the international financial institutions at Bretton Woods that helped ensure global American economic predominance." And so it was Acheson who "not only defined American power and purpose in the postwar era, but also laid the foundations for American predominance at the end of the twentieth century and beyond."

But Chace's account of Acheson also contains another message, which complicates, if it does not actually subvert, that ringing endorsement. For the key to Acheson's great success, Chace insists, was that he was a "realist." In fact, he was the "quintessential American realist."

BEFORE THE COLD WAR FADES AWAY, IT'S WORTH RECALLING WHY ACHESON WAS MOST CERTAINLY NOT A "REALIST."

Those not immersed in the arcana of today's foreign-policy debates may miss the implications of calling Acheson a "realist." But for the past fifty years, "realism" has been shorthand in foreign policy for a systematic way of thinking about international relations. Emphasizing power over ideology in relations among nations, elevating the national interest (defined in geopolitical terms) over moral considerations, "realism" was the hot theory of the 1940s when Reinhold Niebuhr, Hans Morgenthau, Walter Lippmann, and George Kennan first gave it full expression. It enjoyed a renaissance when Richard Nixon and Henry Kissinger were in the White House practicing their brand of realpolitik. And since the end of the Cold War, it has been back in vogue among self-consciously "hard-headed" foreign-policy thinkers—the kind who declare that promoting American principles, rather than American interests, is foolhardy, messianic, and, in any case, a game for sissies.

Realists warn—now, as then—against the tendency of Americans to wish to remake the world in their own image, against undertaking foreign commitments where no "vital interests" seem to be at stake, and against Americans' allegedly congenital unwillingness to recognize the limits of their power to shape the world. More than fifty years ago, Walter Lippmann pleaded for "solvency" in foreign policy, insisting that the United States tailor its goals in world affairs to meet its limited resources. This has been James Chace's particular hobbyhorse for more than two decades. In 1981 he published *Solvency*, arguing, as Lippmann had, that America's Cold War foreign policies simply exceeded America's ability to sustain them.

During the debates of the Cold War, different foreign-policy schools battled over precisely how much blame Acheson deserved for everything that had gone wrong. Now that Acheson's Cold War policies are widely believed to have been successful, all the competing foreign-policy schools want to claim him again. Chace's biography is the realists' bid for the Acheson legacy.

Chace argues that Acheson "never embraced a strongly ideological stance toward the Soviet Union." Acheson did not believe that the Cold War was "a struggle between good and evil," but considered the Soviet Union just another "great power." Impatient with ideals and "abstractions," Acheson consistently favored "moderation in international affairs." He pleaded for "balance and solvency." He was "fully aware of the limitations of American power and purpose." And while he may have

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The Secretary of State in London, May 9, 1950.

employed rhetoric that seemed intensely ideological and that seemed to commit the United States to a global campaign of aggressive anti-Communist containment, in reality "Acheson had a more pragmatic and temperate worldview." Or, to put it another way, Acheson's worldview was not all that different from James Chace's, both during and after the Cold War.

The idea that Acheson was a "realist"—and that, were he alive today, he would favor a foreign policy that is non-ideological, "moderate," and primarily attuned to the issues of "balance and solvency"—is likely to become the new consensus. But before we let the Cold War pass fully into the darkness of history, it may be worth recalling who Acheson was, what he thought he was doing when he built his policy, and why he was most certainly not a "realist."

One of the chief characteristics of realism has always been a profound doubt about the possibility of human progress. Acheson, by this measure, was a liberal. He was, to be sure, a pragmatic liberal. He did not place his faith in human perfectibility, but he did believe that with the proper laws and institutions, backed by the requisite power, men's evil urges could be contained and channeled toward good. Both his career and his policies were heavily shaped by abstract principles and ideals of a particularly American variety. If historians and biographers have missed the great significance of Acheson's ideals, it was perhaps because, as the son of an Episcopal clergyman, he did not feel it necessary or even seemly to explain them. For Acheson, the question "What do we believe?" had long ago been answered. The pressing question was rather "What do we do next?"

The degree of Acheson's commitment to principles is well limned in Chace's biography, though Chace himself seems unaware of the implications of the story he tells so gracefully. Entering his professional and public career after World War I as an eager partisan of the "common man," Acheson held progressive, reformist views that did not stem from any Grotonian tradition of noblesse oblige. As a student at Harvard Law School, Acheson fell under the powerful sway of Louis Brandeis and Felix Frankfurter, two Jewish legal giants whose liberalism was shaped by the conviction that government had a responsibility to protect minorities and society's weak. Acheson's commitment to civil rights, nurtured in those years, persisted throughout his life: In the 1950s and '60s, he strongly supported and counseled Lyndon Johnson on the great civil-rights issues of the day.

It was these strong liberal convictions that had made Acheson a Democrat in the first place. His early political allegiances were with Theodore Roosevelt and the progressive Republicans. But after the 1912 defeat of the Bull Moose party and the rise of the more conservative Republicanism of Taft, Harding, and Coolidge, Acheson drifted toward the Democratic party of Woodrow Wilson, attracted to its reformist domestic agenda, internationalist foreign policy, and anti-tariff trade policies. Like many progressives, Acheson was a free trader. He favored American participation in international institutions. His affinity for Wilsonian ideals emerged relatively unscathed even from the debacle of the Versailles Treaty and the failure of the League of Nations. If Wilson's mistakes were "great and tragic," Acheson later wrote, "great also was his understanding of the new role which his country must play in the realignment of power which the crumbling of empires and emergence of new forces necessitated."

Acheson also became a fervid supporter of labor during the great coal

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President Truman greets his advisors, 1950: Special Assistant Averell Harriman and Secretary of Defense George C. Marshall to his right, Secretary of State Acheson to his left.

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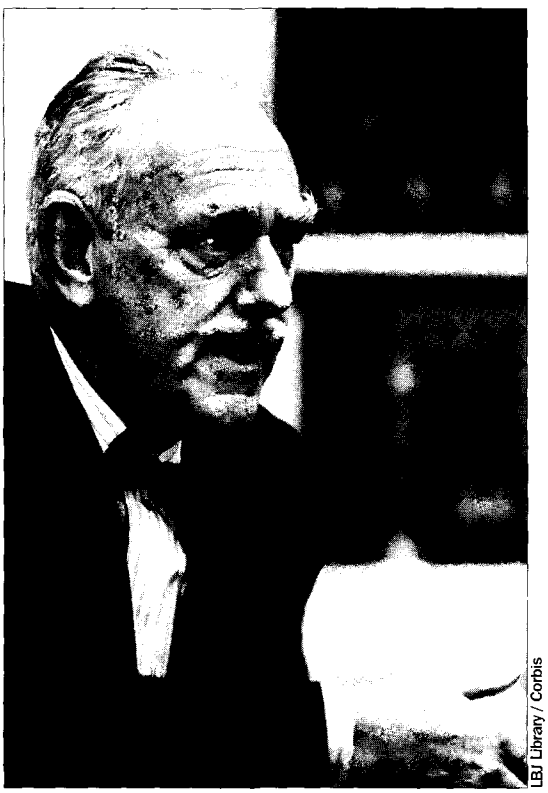
strike of 1919 and the anti-Communist raids ordered by Attorney General Palmer that same year. "The essential role of labor unions in the scheme of our times was to me no longer a purely intellectual conclusion," he later wrote. "I had passed the first test of the liberal; it was a conviction." Acheson's first book, a never-published treatise on labor relations and the law, was so liberal that Acheson himself mused that he might have to find a publisher "in Moscow." David Dubinsky of the International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union, which Acheson later represented as a lawyer at the firm of Covington and Burling, described Acheson as "not only brilliant as a lawyer, well known as a progressive, but one who could understand the heart of our labor movement."

In 1928, Acheson campaigned hard for the Democratic presidential nominee Al Smith, the embodiment of northeastern, big-city liberalism. And after Franklin Roosevelt was elected president in 1932, Acheson was high on the list of enthusiastic young men whom Roosevelt's adviser and Acheson's mentor Felix Frankfurter promoted. Acheson's ignominious departure from the administration after only five months blurred his reputation as a New Dealer and made him popular with Covington and Burling's corporate clients throughout the remainder of the 1930s. But Acheson remained a liberal, all his friends were New Deal Democrats, and within a few years Roosevelt, who appreciated the dignified way Acheson had tendered his resignation in 1933, was once again turning to him with job offers.

Acheson didn't put his long-held liberal, democratic ideals on the shelf when he joined the State Department in 1941 and began making American foreign policy. Like most of his colleagues in the Roosevelt administration during the last two years of World War II, he believed that once Nazi Germany and Imperial Japan were defeated, the great task of American foreign policy would be to restore a liberal international order on firmer foundations than those which had crumbled so tragically in the 1930s.

This entailed much more than reestablishing a balance of power in the world, though that was certainly one essential part of the strategy. Roosevelt, Acheson, and others hoped, quite unrealistically as it turned out, that the United States, Great Britain, Russia, and China—the "United Nations" that had won the war—could undertake as relatively equal players collective responsibility for preserving peace and a liberal order. But they never viewed the outbreak of World War II simply as a breakdown of the balance of power: There had also been that little matter of fascism, imperialism, and totalitarianism. For Acheson and others of his generation, the ideological issues and the strategic, balance-of-power issues were inseparable.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Acheson in the Johnson White House, 1965.

The international structures Acheson and others tried to put in place were unmistakably derived from the idealist tradition not only of Wilson but of Theodore Roosevelt. The United Nations was supposed to be a League of Nations that worked, chiefly because this time America would not retreat into isolation. It is true that Acheson soon became highly skeptical of the UN's utility in a world that contained Stalin's Soviet Union. Nor did he share the more utopian views of the UN as a guarantor of universal peace and freedom. But as "an aid to diplomacy" he did not disparage it. The more grandiose goals envisioned for the UN at its birth would (as the historian David Fromkin puts it) "like Sleeping Beauty" have to be "left in repose until international politics should change in such a way as to bring it to life and allow it to function."

This kind of pragmatic idealism also characterized Acheson's international economic policies. The establishment of the Bretton Woods system and the push for global free trade were critical to strengthening Western Europe and thus redressing the balance of power. But Acheson saw far broader benefits, convinced, as Chace notes, that "a multilateral free-trading system . . . would help create conditions that would lead to general peace and prosperity." Acheson's own description of his views puts him among those whom realists usually decry. "We believe passionately," he declared in 1946, "that only by continuing a system of free enterprise and having other nations in the same state [can we] continue the same sort of world in which the United States has lived in the past."

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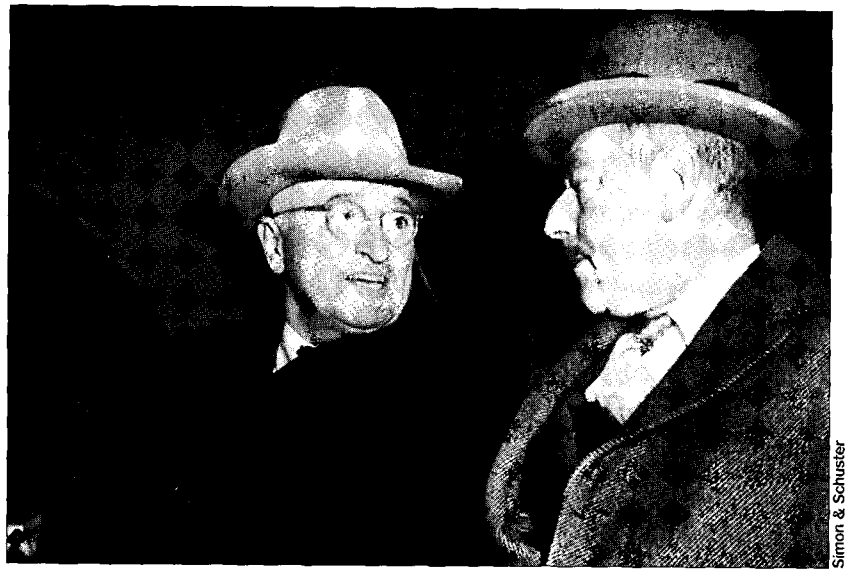

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Riding with Truman, joking with Kennedy.

Acheson's idealism led him, for a brief period between the end of World War II and the beginning of the Cold War in 1946, to some dubious policy judgments. In late 1945, he was the co-author, with David Lilienthal, of a plan to share nuclear weapons with the Soviet Union. The Acheson-Lilienthal plan, based on the ideas of Robert Oppenheimer, called for the establishment of an "International Authority" that would control all nuclear-weapon materials and allow nations to share technological developments. Acheson was loath to give up Roosevelt's vision of a collective security system that included Moscow, what historian Robert L. Beisner has called "FDR's circumspectly optimistic view about future U.S.-Soviet relations." According to James Forrestal's harsher interpretation, Acheson "could not conceive of a world in which we were hoarders of military secrets from our allies, particularly this great ally upon our cooperation with whom rests the future peace of the world."

It says something about his Procrustean interpretation that Chace presents even the Acheson-Lilienthal plan, quickly abandoned by the Truman administration, as evidence of Acheson's realism. (Nor is this the only place in the book where Chace the old Cold War liberal and Chace the post-Cold War realist twist themselves into a pretzel trying to find common ground.) Acheson's hope of sharing nuclear secrets with Stalin was part of a lingering attachment to an earlier hope for global harmony. It may not have been pure idealism, but it certainly wasn't realism.

The dream did not last long in any case. Conservatives who even today criticize Acheson for being late to comprehend the Soviet threat ought to realize that he was late only by a matter of months. George Kennan sent his famous "Long Telegram" warning against the Soviet menace in February 1946. Winston Churchill delivered his "Iron Curtain" speech in March. Acheson, according to Robert Beisner's meticulous tracing of his views, became a hard-line, anti-Soviet cold warrior in August. By the middle of 1946, Acheson realized that his grand postwar vision would not be possible.

Acheson's shift was not due to any change in his liberalism. Before August 1946, Acheson believed he was creating a world order that could withstand the challenge of an as-yet-unseen adversary; after August 1946, the adversary had clearly emerged. And the fact that Stalin's Soviet Union looked more like an enemy than an ally of the new liberal order was only one of the changed international circumstances. China, rent by civil war, was obviously not going to play its part as a great power. And neither, for that matter, was Great Britain, whose abdication of responsibility for holding the line in Turkey and Greece in the summer of 1946 probably did more than anything else to convince American officials like Acheson that a concert of great powers was doomed.

As Acheson recalled in his memoirs, "Only slowly did it dawn upon us that the whole world structure and order that we had inherited from the nineteenth century was gone and that the struggle to replace it would be directed from two bitterly opposed and ideologically irreconcilable power centers." By 1946, defending the new liberal order meant defending it against the Soviet Union and communism.

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When Acheson turned, he turned hard. Much of the confusion over where to place Acheson on the Cold War spectrum has come from the fact that he was so bitterly attacked by the Republican conservatives who called for the rollback of communism in Europe and Asia. Liberal historians like Isaacson and Thomas, and now Chace with his realist interpretation, have tried to portray Acheson as a moderate by contrasting his positions with the ludicrous call of some Republicans for a preventive war against the Soviet Union in 1950: He must have been a moderate because he did not seek the immediate liberation of Eastern Europe or intervene militarily on behalf of Chiang Kai-shek in his battle against Mao.

But that Republican hard line was phony. Republicans, bitter at their unexpected defeat by Truman in 1948, vented their anger by declaring Truman and Acheson soft on Reds abroad, a charge that complemented their more accurate accusation that the Truman administration was penetrated by Reds at home. But they were never serious, as became clear when Eisenhower took over in 1952 and as was reconfirmed when Nixon became president in 1968. Acheson's position was the real hard line in the Cold War, and there were few who genuinely outflanked him on the right.

Consider Acheson's views on the main questions he and other Americans confronted between 1946 and 1952. Should American foreign policy have a strong ideological component, in favor of global freedom and opposed to communism as the evil alternative to freedom, or should it treat the Soviet Union as another great power and seek primarily to preserve international balance? Should the new strategy of containing Soviet communism be limited to Europe, and specifically to the defense of Turkey and Greece, or should it be global? Should the United States try to negotiate its differences with the Soviet Union and limit its military expenditures to avoid provoking an arms race, or should it shun negotiations with Moscow and concentrate on a massive buildup of conventional weaponry? Should the United States limit the interests it considered vital in order to preserve national solvency, or should it keep the definition of its interests vague and flexible?

On every one of these questions, Acheson came down on the hard-line side. He favored creating "situations of strength" everywhere, not just in Europe but also in Asia, where he explicitly called for the containment of communism. He opposed negotiations until the United States had "eliminated all of the areas of weakness that we can." He insisted that the Soviets had to "modify their policies" before the United States could consider "meaningful negotiation . . . on the larger issues that divided us." In order to create situations of strength, Acheson wanted a massive American military buildup, from less than $15 billion a year to more than $50 billion—an increase most in the Truman administration believed would bankrupt the country, but which Acheson believed was well within the capacity of the American economy. It took the Korean War to convince Americans (and, for that matter, President Truman) that Acheson was right.

Acheson also believed the Cold War could, in time, be won. He pre-

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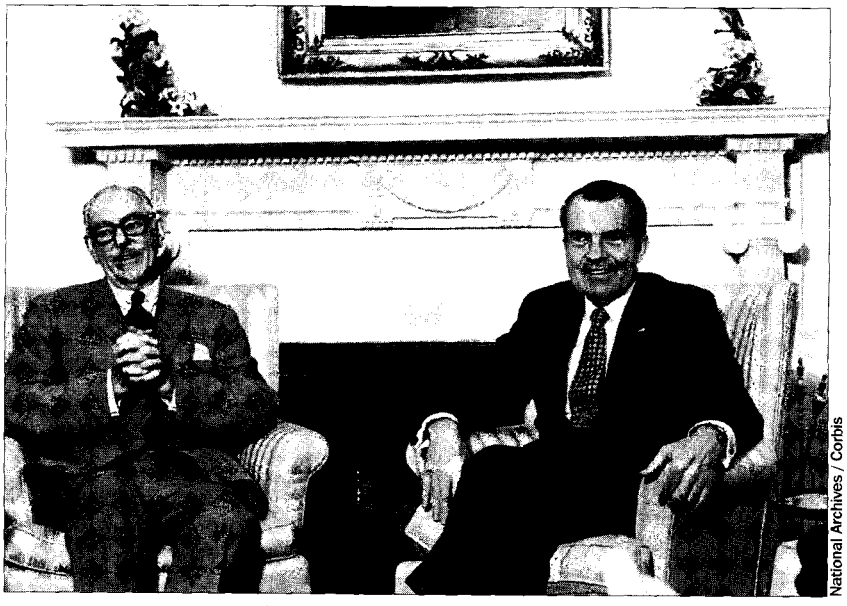

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Relaxed with Johnson, stiff with Nixon.

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He talked "as if a piece of fish had got stuck in his mustache."

dicted a future in which "a thriving Western Europe would continue its irresistible pull upon East Germany and Eastern Europe. This would, in turn, have its effect upon the demands of the Russian people on their government." The pressures for a higher standard of living in Russia would ultimately require that the Soviet Union disassemble its command economy and its imperial control of Eastern Europe. At that point, Acheson believed, negotiations for the reunification of Germany would be possible and with it "the return of real national identity to the countries of Eastern Europe." This, Acheson declared in 1958, had been "the goal of Western policy for the past decade."

Acheson did, indeed, believe the Cold War struggle was between good and evil, a view he wanted expressed clearly in NSC 68, the famous planning document whose production he supervised in 1950. The document's authors, including Paul Nitze, asserted that the Cold War was "in fact a real war in which the survival of the free world is at stake."

The Soviet Union was not just another great power but a nation "animated by a new fanatic faith antithetical to our own, [which] seeks to impose its authority over the rest of the world."

NSC 68 refused to define where America's interests were vital. Containment was to be global. "Nowhere," Chace notes,

> does NSC 68 spell out in any geographical detail where American interests conflicted with Russia's. Although the point of NSC 68 was to call for greater expenditures to defend existing U.S. interests, the authors of the document did not define those interests, only the threat. Interests could therefore expand or contract according to Washington's evaluation of that threat.

In formulating this policy of global strategic and ideological confrontation with the Soviet Union, was Acheson behaving like a realist? There was a fairly well-defined realist position in the debates of the early Cold War years, a view that was expressed most consistently by Walter Lippmann, but also by George Kennan who, despite being the intellectual author of containment, sought immediately to disown the policy. Both Lippmann and Kennan were horrified by the clear implications of the Truman Doctrine; Lippmann predicted it would mean "inexorably an unending intervention in all the countries that are supposed to 'contain' the Soviet Union" and was thus a recipe for "insolvency." Kennan even opposed the creation of NATO and called for a complete withdrawal of both American and Soviet troops from Europe—prescriptions that Acheson and the Truman administration rejected as unworkable and reckless.

According to Chace, Walter Lippmann, George Kennan, Paul Nitze, and Dean Acheson were all realists, yet they disagreed profoundly on the most important issues of the day. There is something wrong with this picture, though Chace apparently does not see it: Either realism is a hollow concept, useless for analyzing American policymaking, or Acheson was not a realist.

The former conclusion is tempting, but for now it may be enough to note that whatever realists claim to believe about the world and America's role in it, Acheson was not one of them. The genuine realist Henry Kissinger knew it. In his 1994 opus, *Diplomacy*, Kissinger writes, "The fathers of containment—Acheson and Dulles and their colleagues—had, for all their sophistication on international affairs, conceived of their handiwork in essentially theological terms." Kissinger goes too far, but he is closer to the mark than Chace.

In making the case for Acheson's realism, Chace is forced to argue that Acheson was often disingenuous. The expansive, ideological language of the Truman Doctrine, for example, was merely a political tactic to win approval for aid to Greece and Turkey using the only rhetoric an ideological Congress and public could understand: anti-communism.

Chace bases this conclusion on Acheson's famous later declaration that, when dealing with Congress and the American people, it had been necessary to make arguments "clearer than truth." Like Isaacson and Thomas before him, Chace

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suggests that Acheson knew better than to believe his own rhetoric. "Despite the messianic language of Truman's speech," Chace argues, "Acheson had a more pragmatic and temperate worldview." Acheson might be blamed for the excesses that followed from his rhetoric, but he at least knew that it was only rhetoric.

Perhaps nowhere is Chace's misunderstanding greater than in his failure to grasp the point Acheson was making about democratic leadership. When Acheson said that his arguments were "clearer than truth," he was not suggesting that they were untrue. On the contrary, they were, in a way, more true. Acheson understood, as realists like Lippmann and Kennan seemed not to, that it is often necessary to return to first principles.

In 1947 Acheson believed, correctly, that Americans needed to be reminded what the fight was all about. It was not, in fact, about how the fate of Turkey might affect the strategic situation in the eastern Mediterranean. It was, as Truman and Acheson said, about the fate of freedom in the world. Acheson feared the American people would not understand the importance of saving Turkey unless they saw how that tactical decision fit into the transcendent task of saving the new liberal world order from the emergent Soviet threat.

Acheson made his point even more clearly when explaining the choice of language in NSC 68. Here again Chace wants us to believe that Acheson did not fully agree with that document's ideological rhetoric and seemingly open-ended commitment of American military power abroad. Acheson used such rhetoric only to gain "support that would have been much harder to achieve had he been more nuanced." But Acheson explained his motives quite differently. He later described NSC 68 as "the most ponderous expression of elementary ideas." And he quoted his hero, Oliver Wendell Holmes Jr., who once "wisely" said that there are times when "we need education in the obvious more than investigation of the obscure."

Simon & Schuster

Justice Felix Frankfurter with Acheson on their habitual morning walk from Acheson's home in Georgetown

In order to absolve Acheson of responsibility for the way America conducted the Cold War, Chace has chosen to accuse him of deliberately misleading the American public, not once but consistently throughout his tenure in office.

But a man of Acheson's proven integrity does not deserve this kind of insulting defense. If it is true, as Chace claims, that it was Acheson's policies that won the Cold War, why does Acheson need any defense at all?

The answer can be stated in two words: Ronald Reagan. It is now clear that it was not Eisenhower or Kennedy or Nixon but Reagan whose policies most resembled those of Acheson and Truman. Reagan, too, saw the world as engaged in a decisive ideological struggle. Reagan, too, drove both liberals and realists to distraction by openly declaring the Soviet Union an "evil empire." Like Acheson, Reagan believed it a mistake to negotiate with Moscow until the United States had created situations of strength around the globe. And like Acheson, Reagan believed America's most important Cold War task was rebuilding its military strength. He even agreed with Acheson on the importance of a missile-defense system. Reagan, more than any other president, carried the prescriptions of NSC 68 and the Truman Doctrine to their conclusion.

This is more than Chace can bear to admit, and it is something that most realists today would like to ignore. To acknowledge that both Acheson and Reagan were right, and that the realists of their day were wrong, is to make a concession fraught with implications for the present era of American foreign policy. If realism did not win the Cold War, as it clearly did not, then why should we look to realism for guidance in the post-Cold War world, when the liberal order Acheson worked so hard to establish is once again under siege? The better policy seems to lie in following the course set out by Acheson fifty years ago—for although international circumstances have changed again, the need to conduct a foreign policy that blends strength and moral purpose has never changed. ♦

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Lewinsky complained that she was banished to the Pentagon while other women who had relationships with Clinton got to stay on in White House jobs. She told Marsha Scott of the White House personnel office: "I never had an affair with the president, but all the others who *have* get to stay." ***—Washington Post***

THE WHITE HOUSE

Memo

From: Marsha Scott
Deputy Personnel Director

To: All Department Heads

We have been receiving increasing complaints from the President's rug bunnies about the jobs they are being offered during and after their affairs with the Big He. Up until this point in time, we have been dealing with presidential mistresses in a haphazard fashion. In order to regularize and organize our procedures, I am establishing a special department of Bimbo Outplacement, which will be directed by Ira Magaziner. To help Ira in this task I am asking all department heads to undertake the following tasks.

1. Sex Toy Census. So that we might get a handle on the size of the problem, please calculate the number of presidential sex associates working in your department. Please count heads. Do not rely on sampling techniques. I understand that because of high turnover, the number of POTUS Playmates fluctuates daily. Nonetheless, if you give us a running count, Ira will be able to tease some meaningful statistics out of the raw data.

2. Bimbo Rotation. In times of high bimbo demand, as many of you have noted, entire offices in the White House are unmanned. On Sunday mornings especially, phones are not being answered and memos are not being filed. In order to keep our bases covered, we would like to work out a schedule with the Easter Honeys so that while one has Oval Duty, another can slide in and take over her responsibilities. This will go a long way to enhance the smooth operation of our administration.

3. Personnel Files. Many of you were solicited personally by the President to take on the young women in question. In order to guarantee that future promotions will be based on merit, rather than, say, family contacts with prominent Democratic politicians, we are hoping to calibrate the enthusiasm of each Presidential request. Did the POTUS look flushed and joyful? Was he reinvigorated to get back to the important work the American people elected him to do? We are hoping to develop an evaluation system that will fairly reward faithful public servants with White House postings, while allowing others to start afresh in places like the National Security Agency.

Obviously, this is a big job. But with your help I am confident that we can keep the traffic on the Happy Highway flowing smoothly and efficiently.

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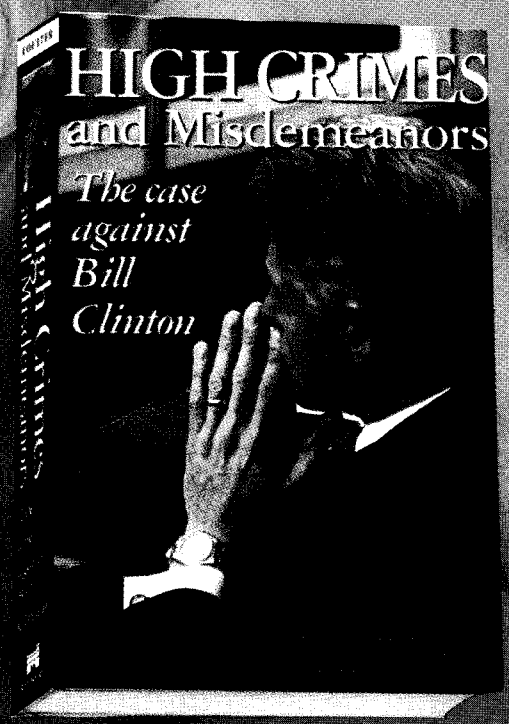

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